NOVEMBER 1964

Commentary

VOLUME THIRTY-EIGHT, NUMBER FIVE

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Willie Morris

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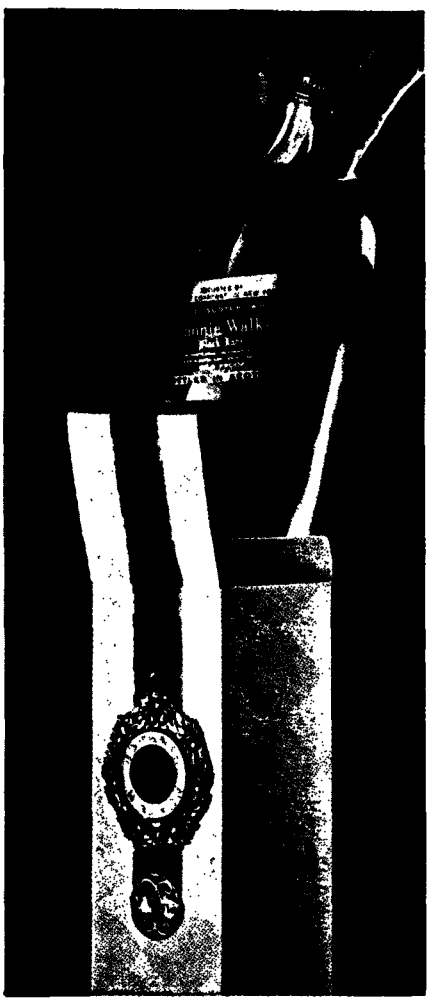

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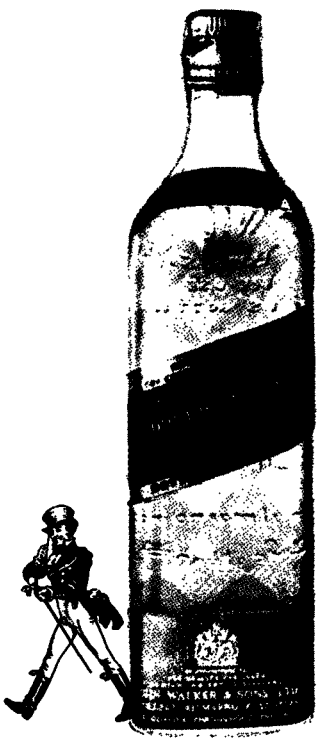

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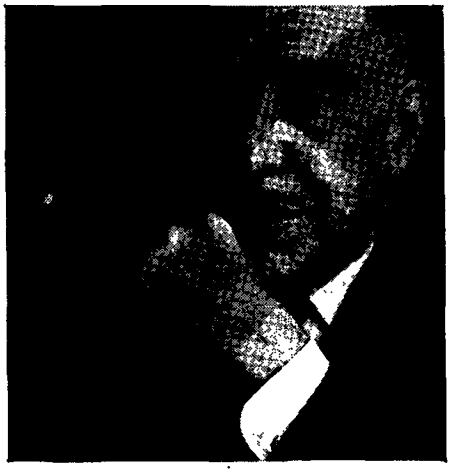

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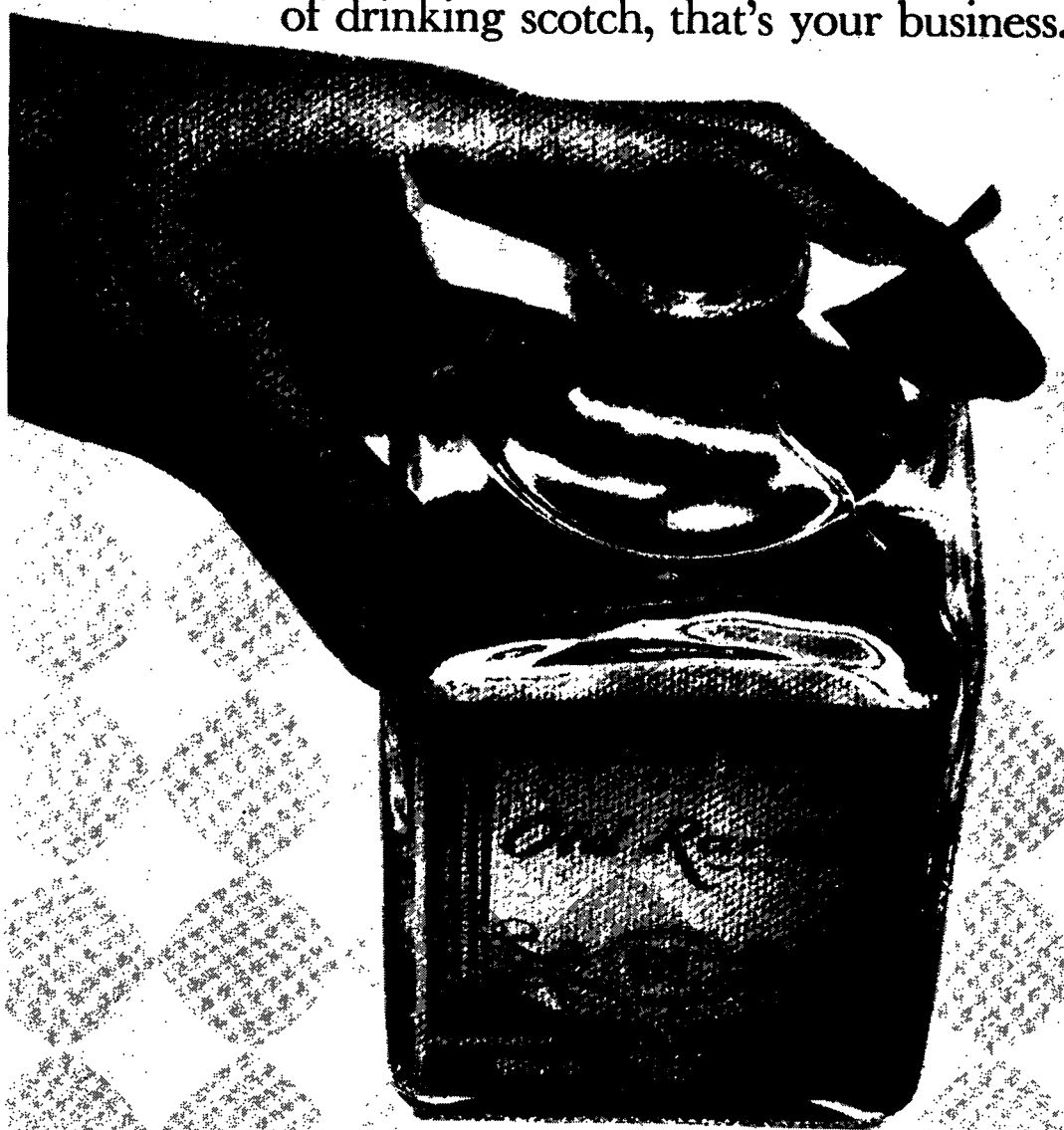

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Commentary

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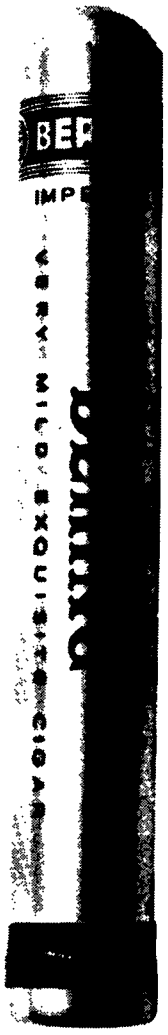

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LETTERS FROM READERS

For the Record

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Since I was abroad during the past academic year, my attention has just been called to the letter of Mr. Sheldon Coleman in your August issue, prompted by my article, "Anti-Communism and the Corporations" [December 1963]. I had described the Coleman Company as a firm that had "in-plant" courses using Birchite materials and had described Mr. Coleman as "a leading patron" of the Birch Society in Kansas. Mr. Coleman states that no such course was held in his plant and that he has not been a member of the Birch Society.

I think that both Mr. Coleman and readers of COMMENTARY are entitled to know how this description came to be written and what the exact situation is. In the Washington *Post* of April 2, 1961, an article under the by-line of J. W. Anderson and datelined Wichita, Kansas (home of the Coleman Company) reported a meeting of a Birch Society chapter in the Coleman Company plant and discussed the Birch Society activities of Leonard Banowetz, the attorney for and an executive of the Coleman Company. The article quoted Banowetz as saying: "We've been running a kind of erratic little course at the Coleman Company," featuring items such as films of speeches by Birch Society president Robert Welch. The article clearly implied that this course was being conducted with the knowledge of the Coleman Company and that Coleman Company employees attended it.

Between April of 1961, when I clipped that article for my files, and the spring of 1964, when Mr. Coleman communicated with a newspaper that had quoted my COMMENTARY article, Mr. Coleman has stated that neither he nor Mr. Banowetz had written to the Washington *Post* to question the accuracy of the original story; nor had they made any public denials of it. Mr. Coleman has stated recently that someone had mentioned the 1961 article at the time but he "did not take the trouble then" to challenge it.

It now appears from Mr. Coleman's communications that the Washington *Post* article was not precise in its reportage. According to Mr. Coleman, the room used by Mr. Banowetz for his Birch sessions was a facility made available by the Coleman Company for civic groups of various kinds in Wichita, and Coleman employees who attended did so as private citizens. Assuming that these meetings were not on company-paid time, and that there is no company clearance of groups using these facilities (so that a local civil liberties group, SANE, or Fair Play for Cuba could use them), I would feel such an "employee free choice" and "open house for all" policy by the Coleman Company to be entirely praiseworthy. Whether the company house counsel should lead such a Birch program in the company auditorium and invite company employees is a question of judgment, but assuming the factors I have mentioned, I would warmly endorse Mr. Coleman's policy.

As to his relations with the Birch Society, Mr. Coleman has stated in another recent letter, a copy of which he sent to COMMENTARY, that he is "neither for nor against the John Birch Society and I expect people to respect my neutral position." Since Mr. Coleman did not "patronize" the Society by actively sponsoring the Banowetz-led course described in my article, I am anxious to indicate by this letter that the proper description of him is that of someone "neither for nor against" the Birchers.

ALAN F. WESTIN
Columbia University
New York City

Cold War Controversy

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

George Lichtheim has scanned the current literature of the cold war and attempted to place that literature—and the cold war itself—in some perspective ["The Cold War in Perspective," June]. In the course of that survey he has been good enough to devote some considerable attention to our book, *The Politics of Hysteria*. Much of what he said was critical, and to answer critics directly is seldom a useful procedure; but

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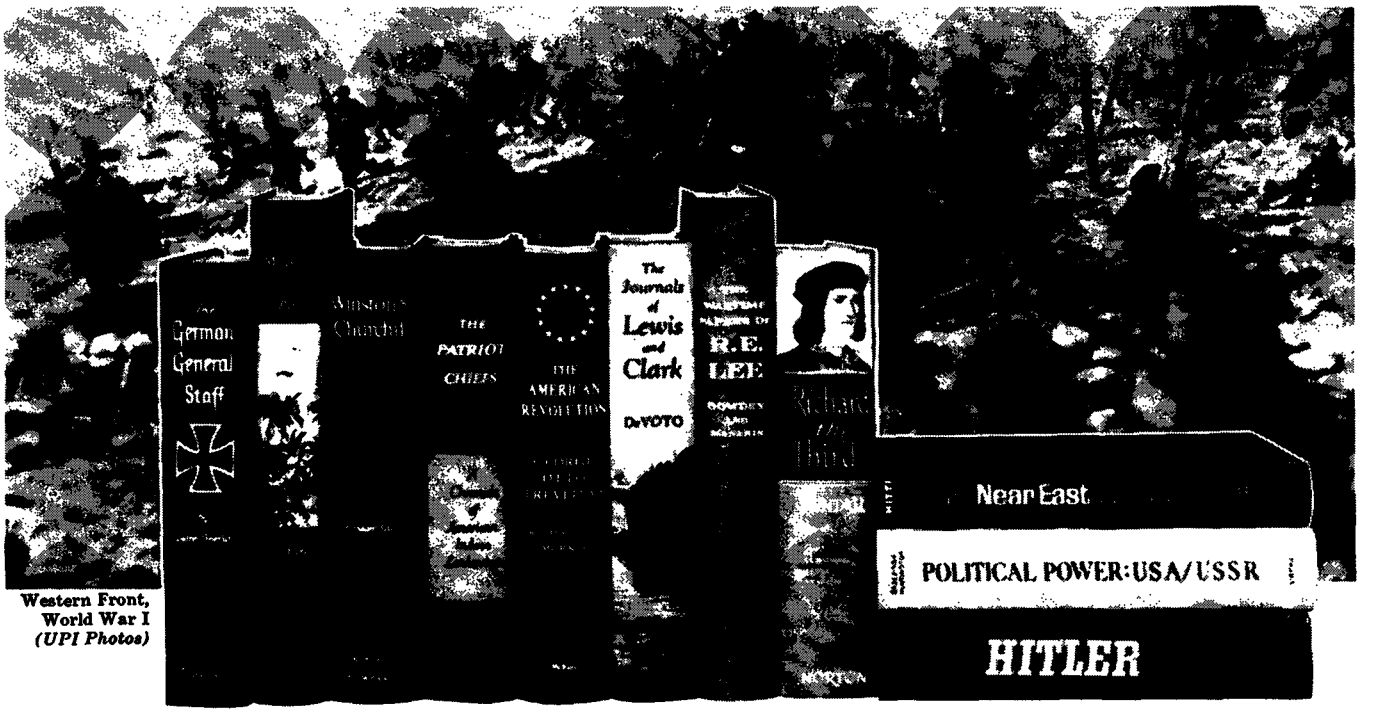

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Mr. Lichtheim's challenge to us suggests some points of general interest and importance. What is at issue is the quality of the politics practiced by Mr. Lichtheim's intellectual generation, and in particular the validity of Mr. Lichtheim's implied view of what has happened in the history of this century, and why.

It is curious and, we believe, significant that Mr. Lichtheim deals with us by inventing for us several positions (and a political philosophy, "neo-conservatism") which we do not in fact hold. He obviously does so without malice and in the conviction that these are the positions and philosophy which we *ought* to hold; and so we should if politics were adequately defined by Mr. Lichtheim's categories. But we must insist—and it is a fundamental argument in our book—that the conventional political assumptions of today, Mr. Lichtheim's included, are largely irrelevant to the realities of contemporary politics: indeed, that they are reactionary, powerless to interpret what has happened to the world in the last fifty years, and pernicious in their effect on policy for the present and future.

Let us begin by noting some of Mr. Lichtheim's criticisms of our book as evidence of more fundamental disagreements. He invents for us an admiration for "the superior spirituality of 'the East' in general and India in particular." He adds the libelous assertion that we hold the Nazis and Allies of World War II to a moral equality. We would, he insists, like Niebuhr and Toynbee, abandon the liberalism of the West: we are "neo-conservatives." Indeed—Mr. Lichtheim's voice rises in judgment—we are unfit to serve in that army of the righteous which battles Communism in the villages and slums of Afro-Asia. If we, and the likes of us, get too much in the way of the West's tough-minded and tough-spirited defenders in this war, " . . . the Communist cooks will take over."

If we put aside Mr. Lichtheim's claim to the post of selection officer for cold war cadres, what this all adds up to is evidence of his inability to grasp that radical criticism of the West and of its political assumptions can come from men explicitly committed to the liberal West and its values. Thus his attempt to disarm the arguments made in *The Politics of Hysteria* by, first, a denial of their relevance: such critics of the West as ourselves must merely be crypto-Indians, sentimental admirers of some moonlight civilization of the East. But we are not. Failing that, the critics must be romantics, nostalgic for the archaic pre-liberal, pre-industrial world, self-conscious conservatives. But we feel no such nostalgia. Finally, if denial is not enough, the critics must be rendered abhorrent: thus his libel that by criticizing the Allied fire-storm raids of World War II against Tokyo, Dresden, and Hamburg, and the nuclear attacks on Japan, we hold "the scales of justice [between Nazis and Allies] . . . even." But we took note of these acts of the Allies precisely because they were instances of unrestrained violence intended to sustain liberal values—Mr. Lichtheim's values and ours—and were carried out by Britain and America, as we put it, "nations central to the development of the humane tradition." We went on to remark that "a moral ascendency over Nazism is no very difficult eminence to attain."

The truth appears to be that Mr. Lichtheim's judgments are historicist judgments; and his commitment to the liberal West is one which requires that West to be of seamless virtue. The former point we will return to in a moment; the latter is, we hold, rather too innocent by half, and bespeaks a weakness of commitment. We hold that the civilization of Western Europe, and of those states whose cultures have been formed by Europe, is of "incomparable originality and power," but that it is also a civilization which has committed immense crimes which are of a particular character—that there is evidence in the West (to quote our book) "of a disturbing taste for [ideological] violence . . . a violence which, like the intellectual and aesthetic adventurism of Western man, is not easily made aware of limits." We can hardly recapitulate here supporting arguments that take up the better part of a book, but we believe that the impact of this Faustian West upon other societies is damaging as well as creative.

In the Western world, used to self-celebration, the process of the westernizing of the world is habitually treated as a benign one. But as the Western historical experience, once a geographically limited experience, is extended to the world at large, we ought to be able to see that this process goes forward in a peculiarly violent way. The conditions of the interaction are cruel and destructive; the consequences are some-

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times benign but as often pernicious. And if it be true that the West has characteristic crimes in its past, as well as those manifest virtues we are quick to acknowledge, then we must face the possibility that a disposition to these crimes—primarily the crime of ideological violence—is neither burned out in our West itself nor precluded in those vaster regions of the world now being swept into the ambiguous experiences of our own disordered Western past.

We argue that much of the violence and hysteria of contemporary politics—in Ghana and Indonesia as well as in Russia and China—is a result of the revolutionary impact of this powerful but ambiguous Western culture upon cultures which do not have, or have lost, or perhaps never had, the ability to compete with the West—the ability to compete not merely in industrial and military power, but in the kind of intellectual creativity which dominates modern politics and economics.

We go on to argue that within the West, and within other societies so far as their politics are ruled by Western ideas, political thought today continues to be dominated by concepts that derive from a pre-Freudian, pre-totalitarian, pre-nuclear optimism characteristic of the 19th century but discredited by the major political experiences of the world since 1914. That these ideas are inadequate, or false, many political men—and Mr. Lichtheim must be included—deny with a fixity that bespeaks an inner terror. Yet our West, and Mr. Lichtheim's, even though he may not wish to acknowledge the kinship, has within the last twenty years gassed to death six million helpless Jews, Gypsies, and Slavs. This is not the vague rumor of an antediluvian crime: it happened in Mr. Lichtheim's lifetime and ours. "Ours is a society," we wrote in the book, which twice within the memory of living men has lost its equilibrium and plunged into suicidal war. Within the memory of living men it has suffered a succession of profound, even unique crises of a political, economic, and moral quality that wholly confound our formal beliefs. They were *our* crises; the crimes were ours, arising from our culture, our West, the same society which today is essentially unchanged from what it was those few years ago when it originated these convulsions, these self-mutilations. We have not yet begun to account for these things. And yet while we hardly grasp the scale of the dark side of modern experience, the world as a whole is being swept into the same experience.

The implications are immense. The truth is that there is absolutely no reason to believe that the catastrophes which have taken place within Western society—limited catastrophes so far— will not have their counterparts upon an extended stage. The non-Western world,

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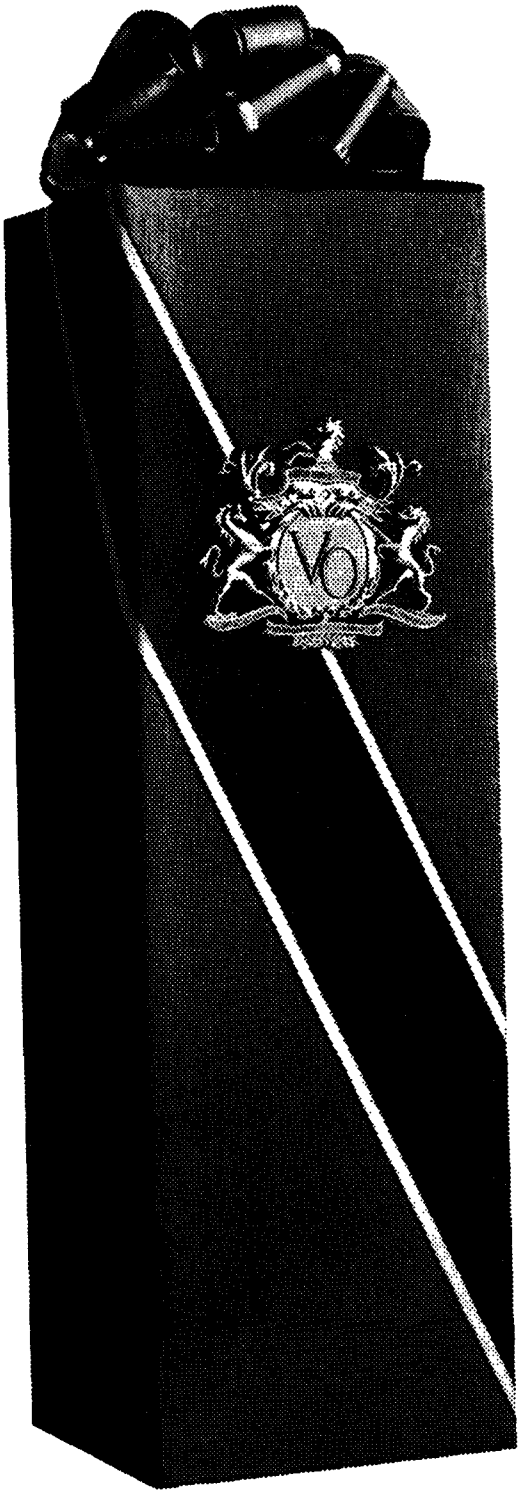

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its own traditions pulverized, can hardly be expected to cope any better than we with the destructive impulses of the modern political and industrial life that we ourselves originated.

But to write such things as this, says Mr. Lichtheim, is "modish despair." To search the Western experience for an understanding of this violence with a hope of checking it in the future is, he says, to weaken the West in its struggle with Communism. The Communists, he tells his readers, suffer no such weakling self-examination, and "their menu appeals to the masses." Yet Mr. Lichtheim must know that this is cant. Where are these masses for whom Communism is so attractive that they clamor for its rule? If anything has been demonstrated in Iraq and Egypt and the Congo and Guinea and, for that matter, Cuba, it is that the revolutions of the underdeveloped world are far beyond the powers of Communism to define and cure. Communism today cannot even keep its own camp disciplined. Its only external successes in the last fifteen years, and there have been few of them, have come from politico-military interventions in revolutionary situations of native origins, and they have had little to do with how attractive the "menu" of Communism is to "the masses." But Mr. Lichtheim goes on: "To hell with . . . [Stillman & Pfaff]; if they can't stand the heat, let them get out of the kitchen." If his remarks sound like those denunciations of pale intellectuals heard in San Francisco in July, it is because Mr. Lichtheim provides still more evidence of our argument that today's Left and Right (and not just the Communists and Fascists) are both of them obsolescent, clinging to ideas that are ludicrous in men who have lived through the last fifty years, or even the last five.

Marxism with its variants, and the official liberalism of the West with its faith in the essential reasonableness of political conduct and its materialist assertion that Afro-Asians (to say nothing of Russians and Americans) are primarily motivated in their behavior by the desire for a just share in the world's wealth, both express a callow optimism quite incapable of explaining why the nations of Europe plunged into the slaughters of 1914-1918, or the rise of Fascism and Nazism, or the deliberate murder of six million non-Nordic peoples by the Nazis, or the ample

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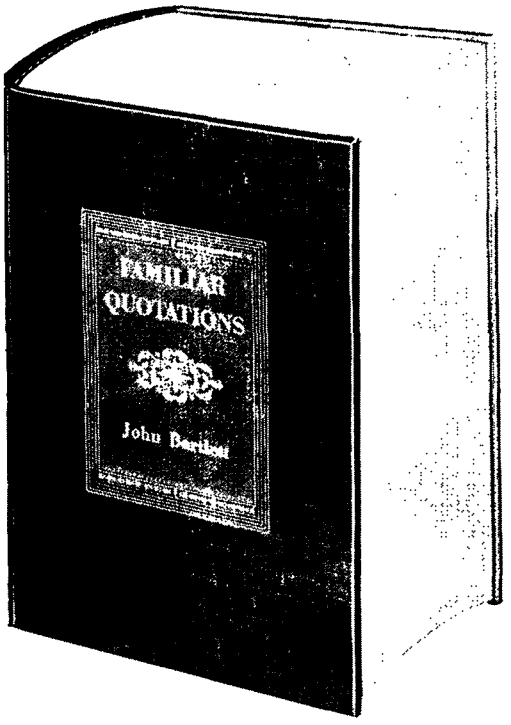

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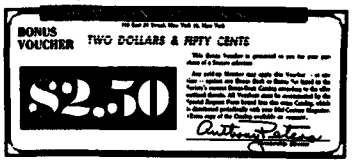

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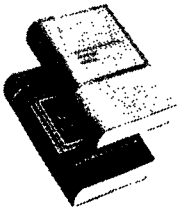

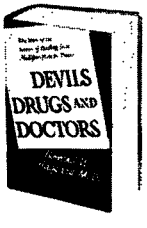

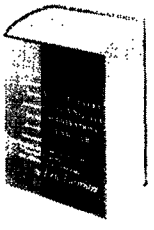

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terror—the show trials, purges, and population transfers—of Stalinism, or, for that matter, some of the things that recently have been happening in Vietnam, Cuba, Indonesia, or the United States. We hold that any man who seriously believes that the violence and hysteria in modern politics results from the fact that—as Mr. Lichtheim says—"most people need, and haven't got . . . three square meals a day and the right to be treated as human beings," is a man who is living in fantasy. That people need and must have food and decent treatment is no news to anyone; but by this time it ought to be clear to anyone as intelligent as Mr. Lichtheim that human affairs include more sinister motivations. Nazism and Stalinism are not explicable in terms of people's need for three square meals. Six million did not die in the gas chambers because the German nation longed for decent treatment. The Mau-Mau were not economic reformers, nor are the internal upheavals of Vietnam or the Congo or Cyprus or China really to be explained in terms of the need for bread and liberal government.

What are these things all about? Does Mr. Lichthem not care to ask questions? Does he never wonder if the old answers are good enough? He remarks that there are "theological roots" to our thought which we "do not even bother to conceal." One of us is a Roman Catholic of whom that can fairly be said. The other is an atheist; but he is willing to defend the proposition that original sin is a more satisfactory hypothesis in explanation of the political experience of this century than that political philosophy of naïve materialism, sired by Marxism out of sentimentality, which Mr. Lichtheim does not bother to conceal.

Mr. Lichtheim calls us "treasonable clerks" because we say such things as this, because we talk about ideological violence in the West. When we take note of the ideological terror of the French Revolution and the mass violence —the "peoples' war"—that accompanied Napoleon's wars of nationalism as instances of this trait in Europe's history (along with the First and Second World Wars, the Wars of Religion, and the Crusade against the Cathars; and they do not exhaust the list), he demands to know if we cannot tell the difference "between meaningless slaughter and meaningful progress"? We

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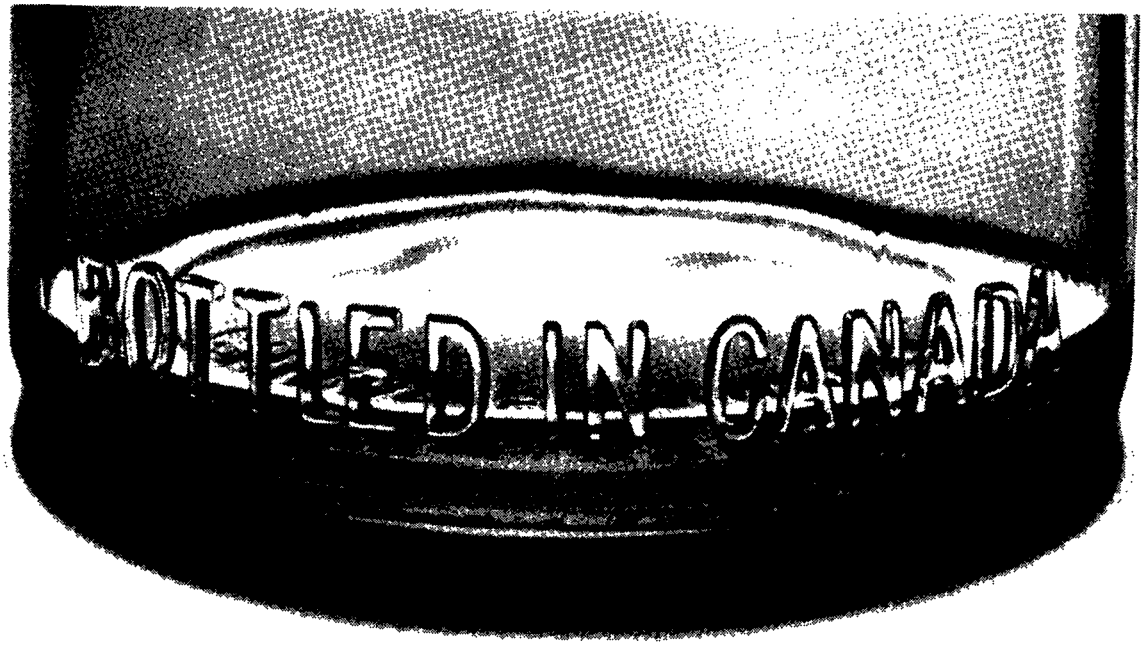

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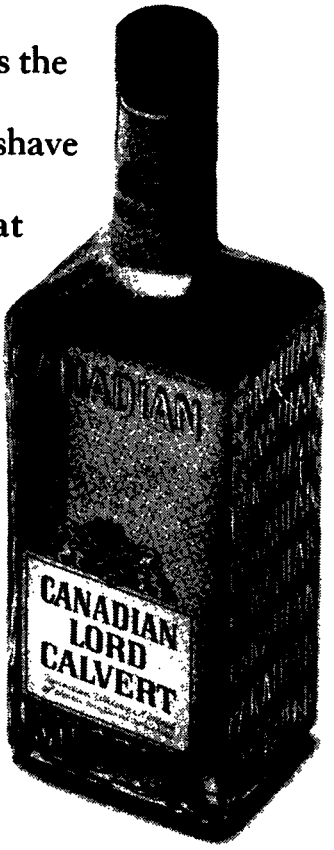

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can indeed. But we also choose to call a spade a bloody spade. We choose to believe that in an age which has produced Stalin and Hitler, treason lies with those political men who can still make the historicist assertion that progressive terror is O.K. terror.

Mr. Lichtheim shares with some men of the Right an air of tough-mindedness. But the toughness is of attitude, not of mind. So long as he, and those who are of his persuasion, can evade the radical criticism of their own tradition, their own society; so long as they make their standard of politics those mauled but apparently irreplaceable historicisms of a half-century ago—they must be judged the new romantics, the new reactionaries. The scandal of this generation is that it still is in intellectual shock over what happened to the cult of optimism and progress in the camps at Belsen and Dachau, in the fields of Verdun and the Somme. The shock has produced denial, not reason. An intellectual system is clung to which was—barely—defensible in the days of Edward VII. Such an abdication of responsibility may be forgiven among the stupid; it is not so easily forgiven in a George Lichtheim.

EDMUND STILLMAN
WILLIAM PFAFF
New York City

MR. LICHTHEIM *writes*:

I had not really intended my critical remarks about Messrs. Stillman and Pfaff to serve as the starting point for a discussion of the issues. For *that*, their book is not important enough—though one gathers that they take it (and themselves) pretty seriously. Their earnest, long-winded, rhetorical complaint about my article implies that deeper thought should have been devoted to their theme. In the face of this challenge I am bound to reaffirm that their joint production is not really a critical analysis of recent history, but a mere tract for the times: intelligent and opinionated, but rather slight, and full of *modish neo-conservative sentiments* of the kind that, for the past fifteen years at least, have been highly acceptable in the dominant political and academic quarters, both in America and Britain. Why should I go back on this judgment? It is borne out by every line of their reply. I find it puzzling that they disclaim the label. After all, conservatism is quite an ancient and respectable creed. I happen to dislike it and to find it boring, but that is no reason why it should not be refurbished from time to time. How else will there be any argument?

My "intellectual generation" has at least one advantage over that represented by Stillman and Pfaff: we have seen it all before. Some of us can even remember the days when that imbecile clothes-horse, Metternich, was solemnly advertised as a great statesman: not by lady novelists, but by so-called historians. There is in these matters a simple but infallible test: anyone who bewails the French Revolution as a great disaster is a conservative. By this never-failing standard, Stillman and Pfaff are conservatives—as they have every right to be. I only wish they were more forthcoming about the rest of their creed (it is nice to see that the theological roots are not altogether denied).

Leaving aside the rhetoric and the polemical claptrap ("Mr. Lichtheim must know that this is cant"), what is the argument about? The cold war? It seems I am suspected of wanting to hot it up! Now it so happens that for the past fifteen years I have been wearing out my lungs and my typewriter trying to explain: (1) that the cold war cannot be won; (2) that "cold war" and "coexistence" are two sides of the same coin, or two names for the same thing; (3) that the principal issue at stake is control over the "third world" of backward, pre-industrial countries. Does that sound like bellicose Westernism? In the very article to part of which Stillman and Pfaff object because it deals with their manifesto, I took pains to recommend Mr. Sinai's work, which is as detached and non-inflammatory as anyone could wish. (It also makes the point that the backward countries stand in need of drastic modernization, but there is no suggestion that this can or should be done by outsiders.)

I pass over the earnest, puzzled, rather sophomoric attempt to grapple with modern history since 1914. Some of us had noticed Stalin and Hitler before Stillman and Pfaff did. We even managed to live through that epoch, and in the process shed whatever illusions about peaceful progress were entertained by our grandfathers. There may be American liberals who still believe that the behavior of the new nations is accounted

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for by "the desire for a just share in the world's wealth" (though the formulation is Papal rather than liberal); there aren't many such people in Europe. In any case I did not employ such Encyclical language: I spoke of "three square meals a day," and hinted that Stillman and Pfaff were somewhat remote from the daily concerns of starving people. Nothing in their reply makes me revise that impression.

Comparisons of Eastern and Western criminality are boring. The point at issue is that human life has traditionally been cheap in Asia, partly because of the constant famines, and in part due to the traditions of oriental despotism—a subject to which Karl Wittfogel is a better guide than Arnold J. Toynbee. I have yet to hear of any Asian Communist who was shocked by Stalin: plenty of European Communists were. Indeed, this is at the bottom of the current split, as a glance at the recent Sino-Soviet exchanges shows. Instead of sentimentalizing over the "destructive" record of the "Faustian" West, Stillman and Pfaff should have interviewed a few Indian or Japanese or Indonesian Communists (off the record). They might then have discovered that the less Westernized people are, the more they take the methods of Stalin (and Hitler) for granted. It is a fact that Far Easterners and Middle Easterners (including anti-Communists like Nasser) admired Stalin, and still do, whatever they may say in public. His crimes did not shock them. Had he butchered half the population and erected a pyramid of skulls in the center of Moscow, they would have admired him even more. The same goes for Hitler, whose massacres (not only of Jews) made him a hero all over the East *before* the Arabs had cause to resent Israel, and even in countries where the Jewish issue did not come in. It was an Indian, Manabendra Nath Roy (once a Communist, later a liberal) who wrote: "Asian nationalism is radically evil." He knew what he was talking about. Stillman and Pfaff don't.

In Defense of Dr. Hayek

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I am not acquainted with the capabilities of Mr. E. P. Thompson and he may indeed be brilliant. I do know a few facts, however, about Dr. F. A. Hayek, whom Ben Seligman [in a review of *The Making of the English Working Class,* July] dismisses with a wave of his hand. (". . . with a tenacious drive for truth and a knowledge of historical sources vastly superior to the Hayeks and the Hutts"). . . .

From 1915 to 1930, Dr. Hayek was Professor of Economics at the University of Vienna. From 1931 to 1950 he was Tooke Professor of Economic Science and Statistics at the University of London, during which time he became a member of the British Academy of Science. For the next decade he was Professor of Social and Moral Science at the University of Chicago. During this fifty-year period Dr. Hayek has written hundreds of articles as well as numerous books. His studies of the Nazi system received world-wide attention. . . .

ISIDOR HODES
Brooklyn, New York

MR. SELIGMAN *writes*:

I don't need Mr. Hodes to tell me who Professor Hayek is. Moreover, I have never held the latter lightly, for he is indeed a formidable intellectual adversary. But the number of academic posts Professor Hayek has held is less important than the body of ideas he has advocated over the decades, ideas that all too often have ignored historical evidence for the sake of bolstering a conservatism more appropriate to the 18th century. If Mr. Hodes wants to know more about Hayek's contribution to social science he might consult my *Main Currents in Modern Economics,* pp. 342-361. Further, while Hayek has written extensively on the "totalitarianism" of the modern welfare state, he has not produced, to my knowledge, any study of Nazism *per se.* Of course, I may have missed an obscure article somewhere. . . (Mr. Hodes might care to know that Prof. Hayek is now at the University of Freiburg in West Germany.)

Montessori Today

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Martin Mayer's estimate of Montessori as an educator is obviously not based on observations of classroom use of these materials but is a theoretical evaluation based on educational research concerning learning processes ["Schools, Slums, and Montessori," June]. I have visited Montessori schools in England, France, Holland, Italy, and India, and I have

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carefully studied many publications by and about this pioneering educator. Nothing I have seen or read makes me feel that the Montessori method will be useful to the pre-schools that are to be developed in America as part of the effort to increase the slum child's ability to learn when he gets into public school.

Mayer's statements that the "Montessori model is the best we have" in nursery education is absurd. . . . Nor is it true that the revival of Montessori reflects "the new concern for the education of unlucky children, both the genetically and environmentally crippled." For the most part, the American revival of Montessori involves normal children from middle- and upper-income Catholic homes. It is a reaction against progressive education on the part of parents eager to push their children ahead academically under authoritarian discipline. (Montessori was able to maintain a benign and gentle discipline in the classroom because she excluded children who did not respond to such discipline.) I have worked with slum children for twenty-five years and know that many of them cannot be reached by authoritarian discipline, nor restricted to directed use of didactic play materials. It is absurd to equate today's American slum children with the "retarded" children of the *Case dei Bambini* in Rome in 1907. . . .

Montessori had no "original insight into the nature of the learning process," as Mayer claims. She applied to "normal" children ideas and materials developed by Edouard Seguin (1812-1880) and his predecessor Periera, who did successful work with mentally defective children. . . . This is not to underestimate the good influence she had on early childhood education [but] other educators are responsible for the dominant ideas in nursery education today.

Montessori's method of teaching reading is not only outmoded, but destructive, establishing brain patterns that make the child dependent upon touching sandpaper letters, rather than brain patterns controlled by the visual brain centers. Children don't learn to read at age three under the Montessori method. . . . At that age it takes them two years to learn what could be acquired in a few months later on. . . . The method appeals to parents who are eager to prepare the child at age three for acceptance by Vassar or Yale at age eighteen. Montessori's taboo on spontaneous drawing is destructive of mental and emotional development. . . .

Montessori and her son exploited the Method materials commercially, operating a business producing them in expensive packages. Shri Shewak Boijraj, head of Balkan-Ji-Bari, children's recreation centers in India, told me that Montessori lost influence in India when she refused to let them be copied in less expensive woods and finish. I understand her son still has sole rights to their manufacture. . . .

The reissuing of *The Montessori Method*, first published in 1912, is logical for today, when America is bent on a Sputnik education under vast political grants for education of a scientific-minded elite. The latest phase of this program is the salvation of children condemned to school failure because conditions at home render them uneducable in our inadequate elementary schools. . . .

(MRS.) RHODA KELLOGG
Director
Golden Gate Kindergarten Association
San Francisco, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . While Martin Mayer's article is about Montessori and the slum child, the Montessori movement in the United States is predominantly middle class. Montessori schools have been established by middle-class parents who recognize the importance of early learning, with special attention to reading and mathematics. This has created serious problems. . . . Parents who want a Montessori school for their children must start it and run it themselves, which means that the problems of having novices as administrators are compounded by their personal involvement with their own children. Furthermore, decisions about Montessori schools made by middle-class parents may reshape the Montessori method in a middle-class image, thus affecting its suitability for disadvantaged children. . . .

A related problem results from the recent, rapid growth in the number of Montessori schools in this country. The immediate demand for teachers has stimulated intense discussion as to what constitutes adequate teaching training programs in this method—the proper length of time for study, . . . the ratio of Montessori theory and materials to standard nursery school

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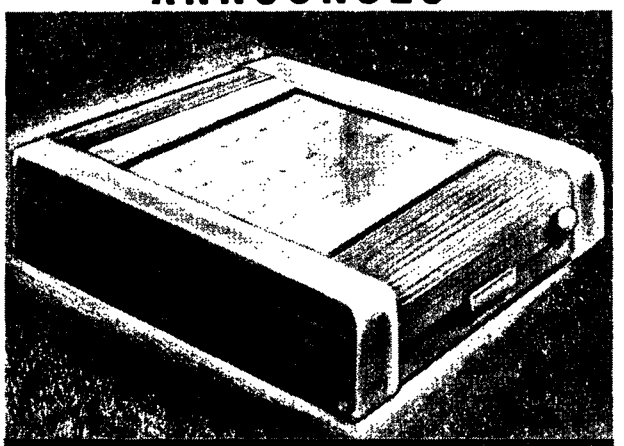

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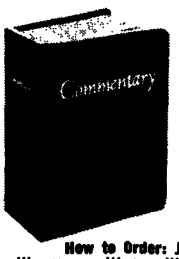

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practices, and the qualifications for being a master teacher.

A major problem in disseminating information about the Montessori method is that the . . . structure of Montessori teacher-training, is based largely upon an oral tradition. Much of the instruction about the use of the materials is transmitted through lectures and demonstration, with each student teacher constructing his own "book." Thus, evaluations of the materials by non-Montessori people usually do not take into account the carefully defined purposes for which the materials are designed. . . .

Mr. Mayer correctly points out that Montessori built her psychological system more on insight than science. . . . Despite her scientific naïveté, however, considerable scientific evidence for the validity of her observations has been obtained in recent learning research. In the field of visual perception, for example, Eleanor Gibson has been constructing a theory of perceptual development dependent upon critical dimensions. Montessori designed her materials specifically to help the child isolate critical dimensions.

David Zeaman, an experimental learning theorist studying basic discrimination processes in moderately retarded children, has concluded that the "secret" of training these children "lies in the engineering of their attention." He then identifies Montessori methods as derivable from his theoretic position: "Montessori advocated the use of three-dimensional cut-outs in teaching form discriminations, such as letters and numbers. In explicating her principles of brevity, simplicity, and objectivity, she cautioned teachers not to present or draw attention to irrelevant details and described ways of making the relevant aspects of the material as prominent as possible."

Another source of validation comes from the laboratory of B. F. Skinner, who has emphasized the importance of eliciting and reinforcing correct responses. As Mayer points out, the Montessori approach places great emphasis on the principle of correction of error. It would seem that the dictates of modern learning theory are very much in harmony with the approach defined by Montessori's observations.

And lastly, Jean Piaget, probably the most seminal mind in the field of child development, has presented a view of developmental levels strikingly in harmony with Montessori's analysis of conceptual sequences in children's learning. . . . Montessori failed in America fifty years ago because our educators were involved in something else. Hopefully, this time we will make better use of her contribution.

LASSAR G. GOTKIN
Senior Research Associate
DIANNE M. FEELEY
Curriculum Developer
Institute for Developmental Studies
Department of Psychiatry
New York Medical College
New York City

MR. MAYER *writes*:

Dr. Gotkin and Miss Feeley are directly involved in work with kindergarten and pre-kindergarten slum children in New York's East Harlem; and their respect for the Montessori position is, I think, sufficient answer to Mrs. Kellogg's fulminations. It is, of course, true that most of the new Montessori schools have been started by middle-class parents for middle-class children, and that the tradition is pretty insecure, in part because Montessori wrote little and spoke only Italian, and after the early years worked with auditors whose Italian was shaky or worse. I touched on both points in my article.

Readers should understand that Mrs. Kellogg is merely repeating the old professional-educator position about Montessori. Nobody (including Montessori) ever said that the method taught children to read at age three; nor have any other actual observers of Montessori schools come up with criticisms of their "authoritarian discipline," although, as I pointed out, such discipline can be read into Montessori's words. It will not do for Mrs. Kellogg to make the criticism and then hedge by saying the situation doesn't arise because the children are pre-selected.

To say that the Montessori method of teaching reading is "destructive, establishing brain patterns that make the child dependent on touching sandpaper letters"—or that the prohibition of spontaneous drawing "is destructive of mental and emotional development"—is to be *really* absurd. There is no evidence whatever for either statement. Phrases like "Sputnik education" carry a fine emotional charge, but they are not quite adequate as a description of the educational reformer's insistence that today's children shall not grow up

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as ignorant as today's educators; or of the social reformer's insistence that the opportunity to participate in the unimaginably complicated human community of the 21st century (which will arrive when today's pre-kindergartners are turning forty) shall not be denied to children because their parents happen to be poor.

The country is full of free-play, day-care centers run according to the dominant ideas in nursery education today. The children who come out of them populate the remedial-reading classes and the dropout lists. Pride in the situation does not become the director of a kindergarten association.

Protest & Rejoinder

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I naturally do not intend to discuss Alfred Sherman's review of Marie Syrkin's book, *Woman with a Cause* [July]. But it was a shock to me, as it must be to all who know me in Israel and in the United States, to read a vicious passage about me that has not one iota of truth in it:

> By 1962, she had joined forces with Levi Eshkol, now Premier, and Zalman Aranne to restore Mapai's badly shaken morale, cut the "Young Turks" (like Shimon Peres and Moshe Dayan) down to size without going so far as to start a new faction-fight, and finally, last summer, eased Ben Gurion painlessly out of office.

In a party as large as Mapai there are naturally differences of opinion and temperament. About this we argue, sometimes even vehemently, but nobody cuts anybody "down to size."

The comment about my joining forces with my friends Levi Eshkol and Zalman Aranne to finally "ease Ben Gurion out of office" is not only vicious and untrue but also proves Mr. Sherman's total ignorance of the nature of these three people and our relationship to Mr. Ben Gurion. It is common knowledge in Israel that my friends and I who have "joined forces" have been for several decades and are now among the greatest admirers of Mr. Ben Gurion, even though we may not agree with him on all subjects. We were among the Mapai leadership who for weeks pleaded with Mr. Ben Gurion not to leave government.

I am sincerely sorry that a most serious magazine like COMMENTARY was used as a vehicle for spreading this slander.

GOLDA MEIR
Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Jerusalem, Israel

MR. SHERMAN *writes*:

First the facts: from 1961 onward, disagreements between Ben Gurion and the "old guard" of Mapai—Eshkol, Golda Meir, Aranne, Sapir, Namir—became increasingly intractable. The matters at issue included the "Lavon Affair," jurisdictional disputes between the defense and diplomatic establishments (the one headed by Ben Gurion and his protégé Peres, the other by Golda Meir), relationships between Mapai and Achdut Avodah (the next party to the Left), the activities of West German scientists working for the Arab war machine, and the power of the "Young Turks" in the party apparatus, which controls far more than the machinery of government.

These disagreements amounted to much more than mere "differences of opinion and temperament"; at times they touched on the question of what kind of society was to evolve in Israel. Moshe Sharett, former Foreign Minister and Premier, who joined with the majority of the "old guard" in opposing the ouster of Lavon from his place in the party hierarchy and in the Histadrut, complained publicly that party life inside Mapai had come to be decided by "fear and expediency" instead of "honor and justice."

In the course of this struggle between Ben Gurion and his Young Turks, on the one hand, and the "old guard" in which Mrs. Meir played a leading part, on the other, there were resignations, threats of resignation, and refusals to serve—on both sides. Ben Gurion resigned during the Lavon Affair in order to force the party leadership to accept his terms. He succeeded by a three-to-two majority in the party executive—the "old guard" making no secret of their opposition and regret. This struggle and its aftermath brought the morale of the party to a low ebb, with resignations, lapsings, and the formation of anti-Ben Gurion groups. The old guard drew the conclusions.

It is quite true, as Mrs. Meir writes, that she and her colleagues "pleaded with Mr. Ben Gurion not to leave government." But the

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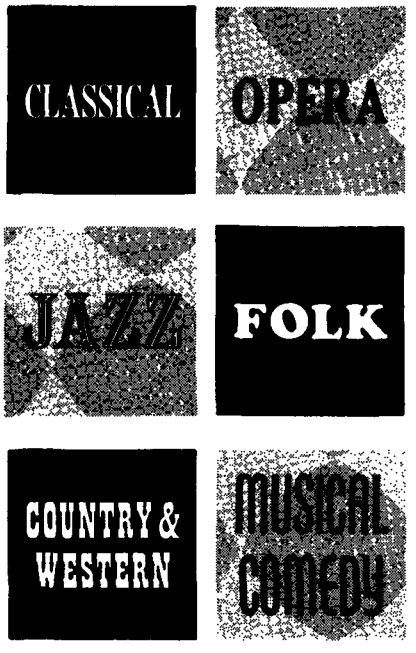

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logic of their confrontation was what counted. It became increasingly clear to all concerned that if the "old guard" stood firm in opposing B.G. on vital matters of policy and personnel, his own terms of reference would leave him no alternative but to resign. True, Mrs. Meir and several of her colleagues were genuinely distressed at finding themselves in this predicament, but they stood firm, and the final stages last year were relatively painless. Ben Gurion and his supporters à *l'outrance* blame Mrs. Meir and her colleagues for his resignation, since by holding out against him they left him no alternative. In fact neither side had any alternative, given their terms of reference and personalities. In my review, I drew attention to the political skills displayed by Mrs. Meir in this predicament.

As far as Mrs. Meir's tussles with the Young Turks are concerned: unlike Lavon, who set out to destroy them politically, Mrs. Meir was reconciled to having them in the government and party leadership but was determined to prevent their exercising anything like the power predicated by Ben Gurion and naturally sought by forceful personalities like Dayan and Peres. The "old guard" finally succeeded in limiting the Young Turks' scope and powers (e.g., Peres's incursions into what Mrs. Meir regarded as her field of foreign relations) while keeping them inside the government and party hierarchy. "Cutting them down to size" seems an adequate description for this.

Now what I said in the particular part of my review here under discussion should have been well known to anyone who follows the Israeli press. It is surprising to have Mrs. Meir react to it with words like "vicious," "slander," "ignorance," and "not one iota of truth," the more so since my review set out to appreciate her achievements as a politician. Her present reactions illustrate the tensions and ambivalence which still characterize the old guard's relationships with Ben Gurion. It would be difficult to do these tensions justice in a short rejoinder.

Antitrust

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Richard Hofstadter's article ["Antitrust in America," August] exhibits his usual incisiveness . . . but certain subsidiary propositions contained in it cry out for clarification. To say, for example, that the younger generation has adjusted to the corporate bureaucratic way of life is not to say (as the article seems to imply) that such concentrations of power do not present serious social and political problems. Many recent college graduates have also made careers in atomic energy and missile development, for example, but surely the control of these forces nevertheless remains one of the most important problems of our time.

John Kenneth Galbraith, already much maligned unjustifiably for his phrase "the affluent society," is saddled by Professor Hofstadter with a major share of the responsibility for reconciling Americans to the disappearance of competition. But while it is true that Galbraith has described antitrust as a "nostalgic goal" he has also recommended (in *The Liberal Hour*) alternative approaches to what he calls this "urgent" problem. A. A. Berle, too, though indicating that "history cannot usually be reversed," has suggested alternative approaches to what he describes as a basic issue. (See his *Economic Power and the Free Society*.)

Finally, Professor Hofstadter states that small business has grown apace with adult population during the last dozen years—a very questionable proposition of ambiguous meaning. Here the author almost seems to be subscribing to an alternative popular ideology.

In absolute numbers, small businesses may seem plentiful, but the percentage of the gross national product for which they account is clearly shrinking. The unhappy fact is that the present method of statistical reporting in this area by the Small Business Administration is inconclusive. Empirically, however, finance executives dealing with this segment of the economy recognize the disappearance trend of small business. . . .

In sum, ideologies may become more or less fashionable, but the problem in actuality persists. . . . As Professor Hofstadter rightly points out, ideology is not a proper substitute for accurate measurement of the problem and reasonably effective techniques of handling it.

MONROE R. LAZERE

New York City

MR. HOFSTADTER *writes*:

Mr. Lazere's letter gives me an opportunity to clarify a few points. It was not my intention to persuade anyone to be complacent about the concentration of economic power, but merely to show that the particular kind of fears about it expressed, for example, during the Progressive Era have largely disappeared. My reference to the younger generation was not meant to prove anything either way about the seriousness of the problem; but I did speak of "a bland acceptance of the large corporation" and "a depressing complacency about the terms and rewards of the corporate life." If Mr. Lazere will re-read the paragraph in which I refer to small business enterprise, he will see that my interest was not in minimizing the concentration of economic power but in conceding, and attempting roughly to assess, the persistence of the ideal of small entrepreneurship and of the aspirations associated with it. He is, of course, right about its decreasing role in the GNP. Finally, I had no intention of maligning Galbraith or Berle; I merely cited their influence to show how a certain acceptance of bigness has become more common in liberal thought. Neither of them has ceased to believe in the usefulness of well-chosen antitrust actions, and in the longer essay from which my COMMENTARY article was condensed I took pains to say this, and to speak of their advocacy of "other economic and social mechanisms that promise to control excessive market power."

Errata

Because of the London postal strike, Paul Winter did not see galley proofs of his article, "The Trial of Jesus" (September) and was unable to correct the following typographical errors:

On page 39, the sentence beginning, "In chapters 13-26 of the Acts . . ." should read: "In chapters 23-26 of the Acts . . ."; footnote 5 (page 39) should read: "Deuteronomy 17: 5-7"; footnote 11 (page 40) should read: "Origen, *Letter to Africanus* 14 (Patrologia Graeca, Vol. 11, column 84)"; the book references in footnotes 1, 10 and 14 (pp. 35 and 40) should be designated by roman, not arabic, numerals; on page 40, the sentence beginning "Hence, supposing that the Sanhedrin . . ." should end ". . . Jesus of a religious offense."

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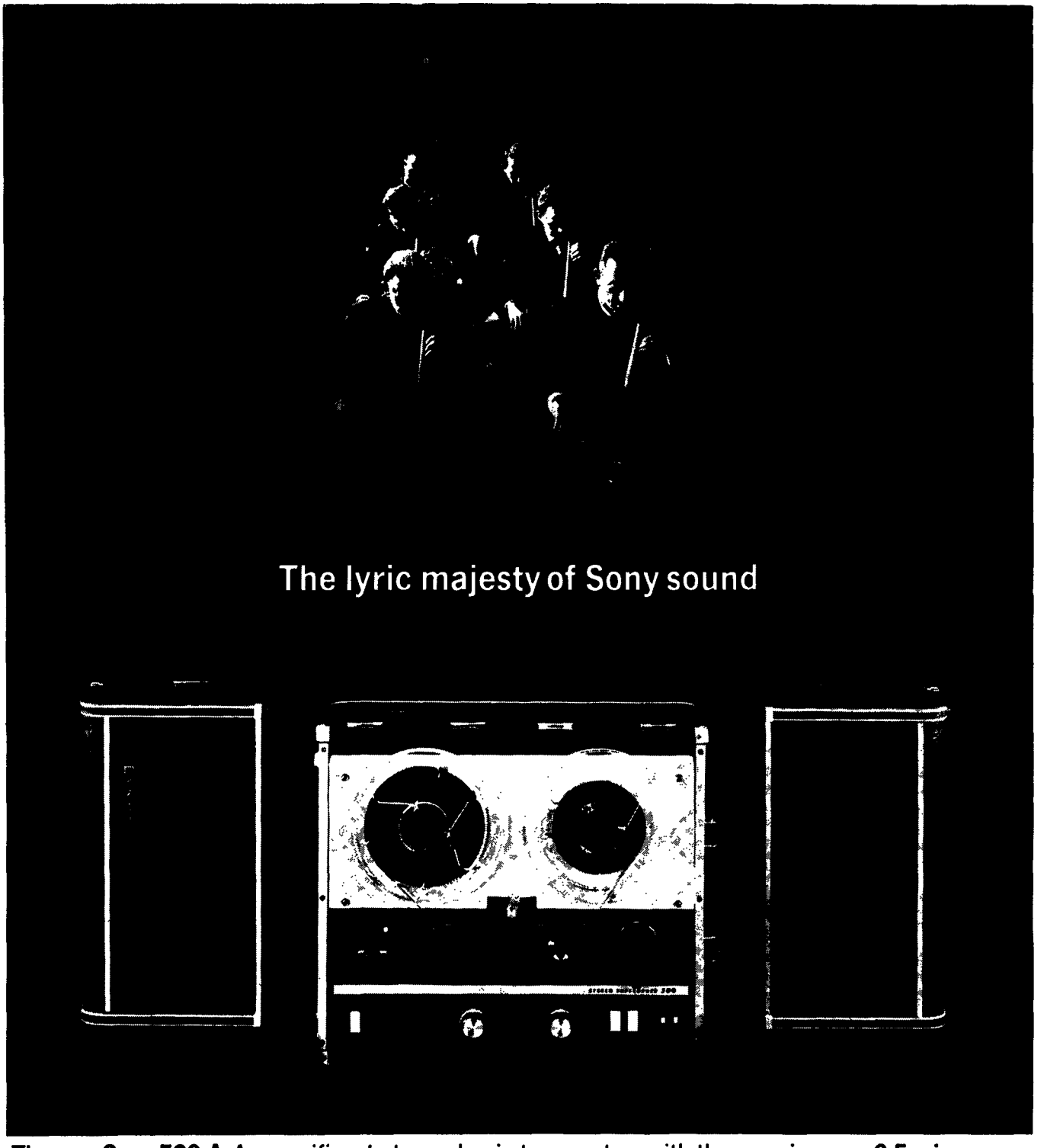

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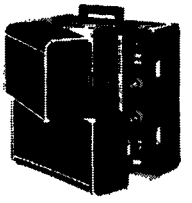

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RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY & MYSTICISM

GERSHOM SCHOLEM

IT IS SOMETIMES said that mystics, with their personal striving for transcendence, live outside of and above the historical level, that their experience is unrelated to historical experience. Some admire this ahistorical orientation, others condemn it as a fundamental weakness of mysticism. Be that as it may, what is of interest to the history of religion is not the mystic's inner fulfillment but his impact on the historical world, his conflict with the religious life of his day and with his community. If, however, we wish to understand this tension that has often prevailed between mysticism and religious authority, we need to recall certain basic facts about mysticism.

A mystic is a man who has been favored with an immediate, and to him real, experience of the divine, of ultimate reality, or who at least strives to attain such experience. It may come to him through sudden illumination, or it may be the result of long and often elaborate preparations. From a historical point of view, the mystical quest for the divine takes place almost exclusively within a prescribed tradition—the exceptions seem to be limited to modern times, with their dissolution of all traditional ties. Where such a tradition prevails, a religious authority, established long before the mystic was born, has been recognized by the community for many generations. This authority has been developed through an interchange between the community and those individuals who have interpreted its fundamental experience and so helped the community to express itself—who in a manner of speaking have made it articulate. There is then a scale of values that has been taken over from tradition; there is also a group of doctrines and dogmas, which are accepted as authentic statements concerning the community's religious experience; and there is in addition a body of rites and customs through which the values of religious life are transmitted and its mood and rhythm expressed.

GERSHOM SCHOLEM is professor of Jewish mysticism at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Among his many books are *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* and a two-volume work in Hebrew on Sabbatai Zevi. The present piece (translated from the German by Ralph Manheim) is to be included in somewhat different form in a new collection of Professor Scholem's essays which Schocken Books will publish next spring under the title *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism.*

Very different media can be invested with this authority. They may be impersonal in character, like a sacred book, or distinctly personal—in Catholicism, for example, it is the Pope who has the last word in deciding what is compatible with the Catholic tradition. There may also be mixtures and combinations of the two types, or authority may reside in the consensus of an assembly of priests or other religious persons, even where—as in Islam—the assembly need not actually meet in order to formulate or lend weight to its decisions.

A mystic operates within the context of such traditional institutions and authority. If he accepts the context and makes no attempt to change the community, if he has no interest in sharing his novel experience with others and finds his peace in solitary immersion in the divine—then there is no problem, for there is nothing to bring him into conflict with others. There have assuredly been obscure mystics of this kind in all religions. The Jewish mysticism of recent centuries, in any case, has brought forth the "hidden saint" *(nistar),* an enormously impressive type with a profound appeal for the common people. According to a tradition that goes back to Talmudic times, there are in every generation thirty-six righteous men who are the foundations of the world. If the anonymity, which is part of their very nature, were broken, they would be nothing. One of them is perhaps the Messiah, and he remains hidden only because the age is not worthy of him. Especially among the Hasidim of Eastern Europe, later generations spun endless legends about these most obscure of men, whose acts, because they are performed so entirely beyond the ken of the community, are free of the ambiguities inherent in all public action. In a truly sublime sense the "hidden saint" makes religion a private affair, and because he is by definition barred from communication with other men, he is unaffected by the problems involved in all dealings with society.

But let us make no mistake. Inestimable as may be the worth of these mute, anonymous saints, the history of religions is not concerned with them. It is concerned with what happens when men attempt to enter into communication with each other. And it is generally recognized that in the case of mystics such communication presents a

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problem. From a historian's point of view, the sum of religious phenomena known as mysticism consists in the attempts of mystics to communicate their "ways," their illuminations, their experience, to others. And it is in the course of these attempts that mysticism comes to grips with religious authority.

IT HAS been said that mystics are always striving to put new wine into old bottles—just what a famous passage in the Gospels warns us not to do. It seems to me that this formulation is strikingly apt and of the utmost relevance. How can a mystic be a conservative, a champion and interpreter of religious authority? How is he able to do what the great mystics of Catholicism, Sufis like Ghazzali, and most of the Jewish Kabbalists did? The answer is that these mystics seem to rediscover the sources of traditional authority. Perceiving the ancient foundations of this authority, they have no desire to change it. On the contrary, they try to preserve it in its strictest sense.

The conservative function of mysticism is made possible by the fact that mystical experience has two aspects. In itself, it is fundamentally amorphous. The more intensely and profoundly the contact with God is experienced, the less susceptible it is of objective definition, for by its very nature it transcends the categories of subject and object which every definition presupposes. On the other hand, such experience can be interpreted in different ways—that is, clothed in different meanings. The moment a mystic tries to clarify his experience by reflection, to articulate it, and especially when he attempts to communicate it to others, he cannot help imposing a framework of conventional symbols and ideas upon it. To be sure, there is always some part of it that he cannot adequately and fully express. But if he does try to communicate his experience—and it is only by doing so that he makes himself known to us—he is bound to interpret his experience in a language, in images and concepts, that were created before him.

Because mystical experience as such is formless, there is in principle no limit to the forms it can assume. At the beginning of their journey, mystics tend to describe their experience in forms drawn from the world of perception. At later stages, corresponding to different levels of consciousness, the world of nature recedes, and these "natural" forms are gradually replaced by specifically mystical structures. Nearly all the mystics known to us describe such structures as configurations of lights and sounds. At still later stages, as the mystic's experience progresses toward the ultimate formlessness, these structures (in which the symbols of the traditional religious authority play a prominent part) dissolve in their turn.

The theology and symbols of the religious authority under which the mystic lives, then, are projected into his mystical experience, but do not spring from it.* Mysticism, however, has another, contrasting, aspect: precisely because a mystic is what he is, precisely because he stands in a direct, productive relationship to the object of his experience, he transforms the content of the tradition in which he lives. He contributes not only to the conservation of the tradition, but also to its development. Seen with new eyes, the old values acquire a new meaning, even where the mystic had no intention of giving them a new meaning or was not even aware of doing anything new. Indeed, a mystic's understanding and interpretation of his own experience may even lead him to question the religious authority he had hitherto supported.

For the same experience, which in one case makes for a conservative attitude, can in another case foster a diametrically opposite attitude. A mystic may substitute his own opinion for that prescribed by authority, precisely because his opinion seems to stem from the very same authority. This accounts for the revolutionary character of certain mystics and of the groups who accept the symbols in which such mystics have communicated their experience.

OCCASIONALLY a revolutionary mystic has laid claim to a prophetic gift and asserted a prophetic function in his efforts to reform his community. But can prophetic revelation and mystical experience be identified? The medieval philosophy of both the Arabs and the Jews tends to support the view that they can—so puzzling, not to say indigestible, did the phenomenon of Biblical prophecy seem to those schooled in the systematic thinking of the Greeks. Prophecy as it was originally understood, however, is something entirely different from mysticism. While the prophet hears a clear message and sometimes beholds an equally plain vision (which he also remembers clearly), the mystic's experience is by its very nature indistinct and inarticulate. Indeed, it is precisely the indefinable, incommunicable character of mystical experience that is the greatest barrier to our understanding of it. It cannot be simply and completely translated into sharp images or concepts, and often it defies any effort to supply it—even afterward—with positive content. Though many mystics have attempted such "translation," have tried to lend their experience form and body, the center of what a mystic has to say always remains a shapeless experience, spurring the mystic on to his understanding of his religious world and its values. And it is this dialectic which determines his relation to the religious authority and lends it meaning.

The most radical of the revolutionary mystics are those who not only reinterpret and transform the religious authority, but aspire to establish a new authority based on their own experience. In

* I owe this formulation to an article by G. A. Coe, "The Sources of the Mystic Revelation," *Hibbert Journal*, VI (1907-8), p. 367.

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extreme cases, they may claim to be above all authority, a law unto themselves. The formlessness of the original experience may even lead to a dissolution of all form, even in interpretation—a fact which enables us to understand the borderline case of the nihilistic mystic. All other mystics try to find the way back from the inner mystical upheaval to form, which is also the way to the community; the nihilistic mystic alone, because in his experience the breakdown of all form becomes a supreme value, tries to preserve this formlessness in an undialectic spirit instead of taking it, like other mystics, as an incentive to build up new form. Here all religious authority is destroyed in the name of authority: here we have the revolutionary aspect of mysticism in its purest state.

II

In examining the relation between mysticism and religious authority, it is particularly instructive to look at what happens when the authority is set forth in holy scriptures, in documents bearing a character of revelation. What happens in such cases is briefly this: the sacred text loses its shape and takes on a new one for the mystic: the hard, clear, unmistakable word of revelation becomes filled with *infinite* meaning for him. The word which claims the highest authority is opened up, as it were, to receive the mystic's experience. Rabbi Phineas of Koretz, a Hasidic mystic, expressed this with the utmost precision when he translated the formula *Rabbi Shim'on patah* ("Rabbi Simeon opened [his lecture] with the verse of Scripture"; it is with these words that Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai's mystical exegeses and lectures are introduced in the *Zohar*) literally as "Rabbi Simeon *opened* the verse of Scripture."

For the mystic, the holiness of the texts resides precisely in their susceptibility to such metamorphosis. The word of God must be infinite, or to put it another way, the absolute word is in itself meaningless, yet is *pregnant* with meaning. Under human eyes it enters into significant finite embodiments which mark innumerable layers of meaning. Thus mystical exegesis, this *new* revelation imparted to the mystic, has the character of a key. The key itself may be lost, but an immense desire to look for it remains alive. In a day when such mystical impulses seem to have dwindled to the vanishing point, they still retain an enormous force in the work of Franz Kafka. And so they did seventeen centuries ago among the Talmudic mystics. In his commentary on the Psalms, Origen quotes a "Hebrew" scholar, presumably a member of the Rabbinic Academy in Caesarea, as saying that the Holy Scriptures are like a large house with many, many rooms, and that outside each door lies a key —but it is not the right one. To find the keys that will open the doors—that is the great and arduous task. This story, dating from the height of the Talmudic era, may give an idea of Kafka's deep roots in the tradition of Jewish mysticism. The rabbi whose metaphor so impressed Origen (he calls it "very ingenious") still possessed the Revelation, but he knew that he no longer had the right key, and was engaged in looking for it. Another formulation of the same idea is frequent in the books of the Lurianic Kabbalah: every word of the Torah has six-hundred-thousand "faces," that is, layers of meaning or entrances, one for each of the children of Israel who stood at the foot of Mount Sinai. Each face is turned toward only one of them; he alone can see it and decipher it. Thus, each man has his own unique access to Revelation. Authority no longer resides in a single unmistakable "meaning" of the divine communication, but in its infinite capacity for taking on new forms.

This mystical approach to Scripture, however, embraces two clearly discernible attitudes—the one conservative, and the other revolutionary. The conservatives recognize the eternal validity of the historical facts recorded in books like the Torah or the Koran. Precisely because they preserve these foundations of the traditional authority for all time, they are able to treat Scripture with the almost unlimited freedom that never ceases to amaze us in the writings of, for example, Meister Eckhart, the author of the *Zohar,* or the great Sufi mystics—a freedom even to despair, as in the metaphor of the wrong keys.

As for the revolutionaries, they too may recognize the religious authority of the sacred book, but unlike the conservatives, they cast aside the literal meaning of the text, regarding it as simply nonexistent or as valid only for a limited time, and *replacing* it by a mystical interpretation.

The history of Judaism provides a classical example of each of these two possible attitudes toward the sacred texts; both occurred after the establishment of the Biblical canon. I am referring to the authors of the exegetic texts in the Dead Sea scrolls, probably dating from the pre-Christian era, and to Paul. It is not yet certain whether the Dead Sea scrolls should be regarded as mystical in the strictest sense. But if it should turn out that the leaders of this sect were mystics (and not merely conservative reformers), this literature will provide an excellent example—indeed, the oldest known example—of a conservative attitude toward the sacred text, accompanied by the greatest freedom of exegesis. Even if the hymns which express the personal religion of this community (or perhaps of one of its leaders) derive their ultimate inspiration from mystical illumination, the world they reflect remains entirely within the frame of the traditional authority; the exegesis is strictly conservative even when it actually transforms the authority. There can be no question of an abrogation of the authority; the aim is rather to restore it in all its harshness.

It is very different with Paul, the most outstanding example known to us of a revolutionary Jewish

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mystic. Paul had a mystical experience which he interpreted in such a way that it shattered the traditional authority. But since he did not wish to forego the authority of the Holy Scriptures altogether, he was forced to declare that it was limited in time and only now abrogated. A purely mystical exegesis of the old words replaced the original frame and provided the foundation of the new authority which Paul felt called upon to establish. In a manner of speaking, Paul read the Old Testament "against the grain." The incredible violence with which he did so shows not only how incompatible his experience was with the meaning of the old books, but also how determined he was to preserve, if only by purely mystical exegeses, his bond with the sacred text. The result was the paradox that never ceases to amaze us when we read the Pauline Epistles: on the one hand the Old Testament is preserved; on the other, its original meaning is completely set aside. The new authority that is set up, for which the Pauline Epistles themselves serve as a holy text, is revolutionary in nature. Having found a new source, it breaks away from the authority constituted in Judaism, but continues in part to clothe itself in the images of the old authority, which has now been reinterpreted in purely spiritual terms.

In both of these attitudes—the conservative and the revolutionary—the mystic rediscovers his own experience in the sacred text. Often it is hard to say whether the mystical meaning is actually there or whether he injects it. The genius of mystical exegeses resides in the uncanny precision with which they derive their transformation of Scripture into a *corpus symbolicum* from the exact words of the text. The literal meaning is preserved, but merely as the gate through which the mystic passes—a gate, however, which he opens up to himself over and over again. The *Zohar* expresses this very succinctly in a memorable exegesis of Genesis 12:1. God's words to Abraham, *Lekhlekha,* are taken not only in their literal meaning, "Get thee out"—that is, they are not interpreted as referring only to God's command to Abraham to go out into the world—but are also read with mystical literalness as "Go to thee"—that is, to thine own self.

III

THE CONSERVATIVE character mysticism so frequently possesses hinges largely on two elements: the mystic's own education and his spiritual guide. As to the first, the mystic almost always bears within him an ancient heritage. He has grown up within the framework of a recognized religious authority, and even when he begins to look at things independently and to seek his own path, all his thinking, and above all his imagination, are still permeated with traditional material. He cannot easily cast off this heritage of his fathers, nor does he even try to. Why does a Christian mystic always see Christian visions and not those of a Buddhist? Why does a Buddhist see the figures of his own pantheon and not, for example, Jesus or the Madonna? Why does a Kabbalist on his way of enlightenment meet the prophet Elijah and not some figure from an alien world? The answer, of course, is that the expression of their experience is immediately transposed into symbols from their own world, even if the objects of this experience are essentially the same and not (as some students of mysticism, Catholics in particular, like to suppose) fundamentally different.

But what happens when mysticism has no ties with *any* religious authority? This problem of the secularized interpretation of amorphous mystical experiences has been raised repeatedly since the Enlightenment. The situation is somewhat obscured by the fact that certain authors, disregarding or rejecting all traditional authority, describe their mystical experience in resolutely secular terms, yet clothe their interpretation of the same experience in traditional images. This is the case with Rimbaud and more consistently with William Blake. They regard themselves as Luciferian heretics, but their imagination is shot through with traditional images, either of the official Catholic Church (Rimbaud) or of subterranean and esoteric, hermetic and spiritualist origin (Blake). Thus, even in such revolutionaries, who seek their authority essentially in themselves and in a secular interpretation of their visions, tradition asserts its power.

Perhaps the best example of a purely naturalistic interpretation of an overwhelming mystical experience is provided by the work, still widely read in North America, of the Canadian physician Richard Maurice Bucke, Walt Whitman's friend and the executor of his will. In 1872 Bucke experienced an overpowering mystical illumination; in the years that followed he tried to clarify its meaning and also to arrive at an understanding of all the great mystical experiences that struck him as authentic. He recorded his findings in a book which he entitled *Cosmic Consciousness: A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind* (1901). The book makes it clear that authentic mystical experience can be interpreted, even by the "mystic" himself, in a purely immanent, naturalistic way, without the slightest reference to religious authority. But even here the scientific and philosophical theories accepted by the author play a determining role, just as the corresponding theories of the Buddhists, Neoplatonists, or Kabbalists shape their interpretations of their experience. The scientific theory which provided this late-19th-century author with his basic concepts was Darwinism, in line with which he regarded mystical experience as a stage in the development of human consciousness toward greater universality. Just as the coming of a new biological species is announced by mutations, which make their appearance in isolated members of the old species,

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so the higher form of consciousness, which Bucke terms "cosmic consciousness," is today present only in a few human specimens. This heightened consciousness that will ultimately spread to all mankind is what is now termed mystical experience. Past generations put a religious interpretation on it—a historically understandable error. The mystic's claim to authority is legitimate, but must be explained in a different way: it is the authority of those whose consciousness has achieved a new stage of development. Of course Bucke's theories strike us today as naïve and scientifically untenable. Nevertheless, I find them extremely illuminating as one more indication that mystical experience is essentially amorphous and can therefore be interpreted in any number of ways.

Still, such secular mysticism is an exception. Most mystics, as we have seen, are strongly influenced by their education, which in a perfectly natural way imbues them with the traditional attitudes and symbols. But the community has never considered this a sufficient safeguard. By its very nature mysticism involves the danger of an uncontrolled and uncontrollable deviation from traditional authority. This is no doubt one of the many reasons for the widespread belief that a mystic requires a spiritual guide, or *guru*, as he is called in India. On the face of it, the function of the *guru* is primarily psychological. He prevents the student who sets out to explore the world of mysticism from straying off into dangerous situations. For confusion or even madness lurk in wait: the path of the mystic is beset by perils; it borders on abysses of consciousness and demands a sure and measured step. The Yogis, the Sufis, and the Kabbalists, no less than the manuals of Catholic mysticism, stress the need for a spiritual guide, without whom the mystic runs the risk of losing himself in the wilderness of mystical adventure. The guide should be capable of preserving the proper balance in the mystic's mind. He alone is familiar with the practical applications of the various doctrines, which cannot be learned from books. And he has an additional function, which has been very little discussed but is nevertheless of great importance: he represents traditional religious authority. He molds the mystic's interpretation of his experience, guiding it into channels that are acceptable to established authority. How does he accomplish this? By preparing his student for what he may expect along the way and at the goal. He provides at the outset the traditional coloration which the mystical experience, however amorphous, will assume in the consciousness of the novice.

Let us consider, for example, the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola, an invaluable manual of Catholic mysticism. From the start it impregnates the consciousness of the novice with the images of Christ's Passion. It shows exactly what the novice has to expect at every step, and sets out to produce the phenomenon it promises. It is the same, to take an example from Jewish mysticism, with the Hasidic-Kabbalistic analysis of the stages of meditation and ecstasy, contained in a famous treatise emanating from the Habad school of White Russian Hasidism, *Kuntras ha-Hithpa'aluth* by Rabbi Baer, son of Rabbi Shne'ur Zalman of Ladi. It informs the traveler on the path of "active" contemplation in detail of the stages through which he must pass if his mystical career is to conform to the strict Jewish conceptions of the pure fear and pure love of God, and if he is to be safeguarded against uncontrollable emotional excesses. It provides the traditional Kabbalistic symbols with which this path of the Jewish mystic toward the experience of the divine can be described or interpreted, thus making certain that the path will conform, especially at its most dangerous turning points, to the dictates of authority.

To keep mysticism within the framework of constituted authority, compromises were often necessary. As a highly instructive example of such compromises—an example of how the conservative and the "progressive" aspects of mysticism can merge to form a single eloquent symbol—I should like to discuss here the Kabbalistic conception of the *gilluy Eliyahu*, the "Revelation of the Prophet Elijah."

All monotheistic religions possess a distinct conception, one might call it a philosophy, of their own history. In this view, the first revelation expressing the fundamental contents of a religion is the greatest, the highest in rank, and each successive revelation is lower and less authoritative than the last. This obviously creates a serious problem for the mystic, who imputes enormous value to his fresh, living experience. Thus compromise solutions became necessary and they were inevitably reflected in the religious terminology. In Rabbinical Judaism, from which Kabbalistic mysticism developed, a number of different revelations were recognized as authentic and each in its own way authoritative—namely, the revelations of Moses, of the Prophets, of the Holy Spirit (which spoke in the authors of the Psalms and other parts of the Bible), of the receivers of the "Heavenly Voice" (*bath kol*, believed to have been audible in the Talmudic era), and finally the "revelation of the Prophet Elijah." The principle remained in force—each of these stages represents a lesser degree of authority than the stage preceding it. But mystics could still make a place for their experience within the traditional framework, provided they defined it in accordance with this descending scale of values.

This was why, when the first Kabbalists appeared on the scene of Jewish history, in Languedoc at the end of the 12th century, they claimed no more for themselves than the modest rank of receivers of a "revelation of the Prophet Elijah." But it is less modest than it seems, for since the beginnings

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of Rabbinical Judaism the Prophet Elijah has been a figure profoundly identified with the central preoccupations of Jewry. It is he who carries the divine message from generation to generation, he who at the end of time will reconcile all the conflicting opinions, traditions, and doctrines manifested in Judaism. Men of true piety meet him in the market place no less than in visions. Since he was conceived as the vigilant custodian of the Jewish religious ideal, the Messianic guardian and guarantor of the tradition, it was impossible to suppose that he would ever reveal or communicate anything that was in fundamental contradiction with the tradition. Thus by its very nature the interpretation of mystical experience as a revelation of the Prophet Elijah tended far more to confirm than to question the traditional authority.

It is extremely significant that the first Kabbalists said to have attained this rank were Rabbi Abraham of Posquières and his son Isaac the Blind. Abraham ben David (d. 1198) was the greatest Rabbinical authority of his generation in southern France, a man deeply rooted in Talmudic learning and culture. But at the same time he was a mystic, who formulated his experience in distinctly conservative terms. He himself relates in his writings that the Holy Spirit appeared to him in his house of study; but the Kabbalists said it was the Prophet Elijah who had appeared to him. This interpretation alone could guarantee that no conflict would arise between the Rabbi's traditional knowledge and the translation of his mystical experience into new conceptions. And when his son, a pure contemplative mystic without any outstanding claim to Rabbinical authority, carried on in his father's mystical path, the same claim was raised for him. The doctrines formulated by him and his school were looked upon as a legitimate completion of Rabbinical doctrine, whose adherents were in no danger of conflict with traditional authority. Yet tremendous forces were at work in this mysticism, and the symbols in which the new revelation was communicated disclose an intense and by no means undangerous conflict with traditional authority.

This was at the very beginning of Kabbalism. The same phenomenon is to be met with in a central figure of its later development, Isaac Luria in the 16th century. Luria represents both aspects of mysticism in their fullest flower. His whole attitude was decidedly conservative. He fully accepted the established religious authority, which indeed he undertook to reinforce by enhancing its stature and giving it deeper meaning. Nevertheless, the ideas he employed in this apparently conservative task were utterly new and seem doubly daring in their conservative context. And yet, for all their glaring novelty, they were not regarded as a break with traditional authority because the authority of the Prophet Elijah was claimed for them—a claim that was widely accepted thanks to Luria's impressive personality and piety. But though defined in traditional categories, this new authority, once accepted, brought about profound changes in Judaism, even when its advocates claimed to be doing nothing of the sort. In line with the prevailing view that each new revelation is lower in rank than the last, Luria was reticent about the source of his inspiration. But this reticence should not mislead us. The mystical experience that was his source is still as authentic as any, and as high in rank as any earlier phenomenon in the world of Rabbinical Judaism.

IV

THE MYSTIC who lends new symbolic meaning to his holy texts, to the doctrines and ritual of his religion—and this is just what almost all mystics have done and what largely accounts for their importance in the history of religions—discovers a new dimension, a new depth in his own tradition. In employing symbols to describe his own experience and to formulate his interpretations of it, he is actually setting out to confirm religious authority by reinterpreting it, regardless of whether he looks upon the traditional conceptions as symbols or attempts to elucidate them with the help of new symbols. But by thus opening up the symbolic dimensions, he transforms religious authority, and his symbolism is the instrument of this transformation. He bows to authority in pious veneration, but this does not prevent him from transforming it, sometimes radically. He uses old symbols and lends them new meaning, he may even use new symbols and give them an old meaning—in either case we find a dialectical interrelationship between the conservative aspects and the novel, productive aspects of mysticism.

Are we justified in saying that the religious authority is a conscious power in the mind of the mystic, while his conflict with it is rooted in the unconscious layers of his experience? Undoubtedly there have been mystics in whom the dividing line between conscious and unconscious coincided with the dividing line between their conservative and revolutionary tendencies. But this should not lead us to oversimplify. Usually these dividing lines are not so clear. Often enough the conflict takes place quite openly and the mystic is perfectly aware of it: he knows that he must oppose the existing authority, that he has been chosen to found a new authority or to do away with authority altogether.

This was the case with the great leaders of the Anabaptists, whose mystical inspiration is undeniable, and of the Quakers—to cite only these two striking examples from the history of Christianity. And in Judaism the same is true of the Sabbatian and Hasidic leaders. The psychological and historical categories are by no means identical. Often mystics have done their utmost to express themselves within the framework of established author-

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ity, and were driven to open conflict with it only when they met with too much opposition within their community. But if they had been free to choose, they would have avoided these conflicts which were not of their seeking. In certain cases it can be shown that the mystics began to put an increasingly radical interpretation on their ideas only after a conflict had been forced upon them.

The *Journal* of John Wesley, founder of Methodism, provides an excellent example of this. Seldom has it been described so clearly how a mystic, caught up in the dialectic of his experience, struggled with all his might to avoid being drawn into conflict with the established religious authority. A conflict with the Anglican Church was forced upon Wesley, not from within but from without, but then he accepted it with full awareness and fought his battle to a finish. As far as the available documents allow us to judge, the situation of Valentinus, the outstanding Gnostic leader, seems to have been of much the same order. And we find a similar development in the history of Hasidism, whose first leaders had no thought of clashing with Rabbinical authority. When the conflict was forced upon them, some of them gave free rein to their spiritualist mysticism; after a time, however, the movement and its Rabbinical adversaries arrived at a compromise, shaky at first but gradually gaining in stability.

But under what circumstances does conflict arise? What kind of mysticism invites conflict with authority, and what kind does not? To these questions, unfortunately, we have no satisfactory answer. Such conflicts are largely unpredictable and do not hinge essentially on the personality or doctrines of the mystic. They depend entirely on historical circumstances. Yet perhaps there is one exception to this statement: those mystics who may be characterized as innately radical—a quality of personality that is by no means limited to mystics. There are plenty of men who incline by nature to the radical formulation of their ideas, who chafe at authority of any kind and have no patience whatever with the folly of their fellow men. They need not necessarily be mystics to enter into opposition to established authority. But when they do happen to be mystics, this radical tendency tends to become particularly marked, as in the case of George Fox at the inception of the English Quaker movement.

Only in the rare and extreme case of nihilistic mysticism do mystical doctrines *as such* imply conflict. Otherwise, doctrines which have been expressed with the utmost force at certain times and places without leading to any conflict whatsoever may, under other historical conditions, foment violent struggles. Of this the history of Catholic mysticism contains famous examples, and a historian of mysticism can derive little benefit from the attempts of the apologists to prove that two doctrines, one of which has been accepted by the Church, while the other has been condemned as heretical, only appear to be similar, but are in reality fundamentally different. It was not, for instance, the doctrines of quietism as originally formulated by its representatives in the Spanish Church that had changed when Madame Guyon was condemned toward the end of the 17th century; what had changed was the historical situation.

We find the same situation in Hasidism. When Israel Baal-Shem, the 18th-century founder of Polish Hasidism, put forward the mystical thesis that communion with God (*devekuth*) is more important than the study of books, it aroused considerable opposition and was cited in all the anti-Hasidic polemics as proof of the movement's subversive and anti-Rabbinical tendencies. But the exact same theory had been advanced two hundred years before by Isaac Luria himself in Safed without arousing the slightest antagonism. It was not the thesis that had changed, but the historical climate.

Let us now turn from the attitude of the mystics toward authority to the efforts of the authorities to contain the strivings of the mystics within the traditional framework. As we have already seen, the authorities usually do their best to place obstacles in the path of the mystic. They give him no encouragement, and if in the end the obstacles frighten the mystic and bring him back to the old accustomed ways—so much the better from the standpoint of authority.

All great institutional religions have shown a marked distaste for lay mystics—that is, the unlearned mystics who, fired by the intensity of their experience, believe they can dispense with the traditional and approved channels of religious life. The less educated the candidate for mystical illumination, the less he knew of theology, the greater was the danger of a conflict with authority. Regardless of their specific content, all manuals of mysticism written from the standpoint of traditional authority illustrate this point. The Jewish authorities, for example, tried to avoid conflicts by restricting the right to engage in mystical practice and speculation to fully trained Talmudic scholars. All Kabbalistic manuals quote Maimonides's warning: "No one is worthy to enter Paradise [the realm of mysticism] who has not first taken his fill of bread and meat," i.e., the common fare of sober Rabbinical learning.

Such warnings, it must be admitted, were none too effective. The history of the great religions abounds in lay mysticism and in movements growing out of it. In the history of Christianity lay mysticism is exemplified by movements like the Gnostics, the Brethren of the Free Spirit, the Spanish Alumbrados, and the Protestant sects of the last four centuries. The Church, it is true, branded all such movements as heresies. But in Judaism this was not always the case. Although many of

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the great Kabbalists fully met the requirements of Maimonides's conservative warning, there were always Kabbalists who were not so well versed in Rabbinical knowledge or who, in any event, had no complete Talmudic schooling. A case in point is the most celebrated of all the Jewish mystics of recent centuries, Israel Baal-Shem, known as the Baal-Shem Tov. His "knowledge" in the traditional sense of the word was very meager; he had no teacher of flesh and blood to guide him on his way—the only spiritual guide he ever alluded to was the Prophet Ahijah of Shiloh, with whom he was in constant spiritual and visionary contact. In short, he was a pure lay mystic, and lay mysticism was a vital factor in the development of the Hasidic movement he founded. Yet this movement (though at the price of compromise) won the recognition of the traditional authority. Other movements, in which lay mysticism played an important part—Sabbatianism, for example—were unable to gain such recognition and were forced into open conflict with Rabbinical authority.

Especially in monotheistic religions the religious authorities had still another method of avoiding conflict with the mystics of the community. This was to charge them with social responsibility. They put pressure on the mystics to mingle with the simple folk, to participate in their activities, instead of remaining among themselves in communities of the "enlightened." In Christianity, where since the beginnings of monasticism mystics have always been able to band together, this trend has not always been as clear as in Judaism. From the Talmudic period on, we find a decided disinclination to let mystics organize communities of their own. Time and time again the rabbis insisted that mystical experience, the "love of God," must be confirmed by activity in the human community, that it was not enough for an individual to pour out his soul to God. This tendency has been highly effective in "taming" mystics and holding them within the limits imposed by traditional authority.

In diametrical and irreconcilable opposition to such attempts to relieve the tension between mysticism and religious authority stands the extreme case of mystical nihilism, in which all authority is rejected in the name of mystical experience or illumination. At first glance the nihilist mystic seems to be the most free, the most faithful to his central insight; for having attained the highest goal of mystical experience—namely, the dissolution of all form—he repudiates all values and the authority which guarantees the validity of values. Yet from the standpoint of history, he is the most constrained and unfree of mystics, for historical reality as embodied in the human community prevents him, far more than it does any other mystic, from openly proclaiming his message. This, no doubt, explains why the documents of nihilistic mysticism are extremely rare. Because of their subversive character the authorities suppressed and destroyed them; where they have come down to us, it is because their authors resorted to an ambiguity of expression that makes our interpretation of the texts questionable.

For want of the original sources of 2nd-century gnostic nihilism, which have not survived, it seems to me that we possess no more impressive record of an unmistakably nihilistic mysticism than the Polish *Book of the Words of the Lord,* in which the disciples of Jacob Frank (1726-97) set down their master's teachings after his own spoken words. This book, springing from the radical wing of the Sabbatian movement, illustrates how the mystical experience of man's contact with the primal source of life could find its expression in a symbol implying the negation of all authority. An illumination concerning Messianic freedom in redemption crystallizes for Frank around the symbol of Life. This "Life," however, is not the harmonious life of all things in bond with God, a world ordered by divine law and submissive to His authority. It is, on the contrary, utterly free, fettered by no law or authority, and it never ceases to produce forms and to destroy what it has produced: it is the anarchic promiscuity of all living things. Into this bubbling cauldron, this continuum of destruction, the mystic plunges. To him it is the ultimate human experience. For Frank, anarchic destruction represented all the Luciferian radiance, all the positive tones and overtones, of the word "Life." The nihilistic mystic descends into the abyss in which the freedom of living things is born; he passes through all the embodiments and forms that come his way, committing himself to none; and not content with rejecting and abrogating all values and laws, he tramples them underfoot and desecrates them, in order to attain the elixir of Life.

It goes without saying that from the standpoint of the community and its institutions, such mysticism should have been regarded as demonic possession. And it is indicative of one of the enormous tensions that run through the history of Judaism that this most destructive of all visions should have been formulated in its most unrestrained form by one who rebelled against the Jewish law and broke away from Judaism.

V

A STATEMENT which has come down to us from Rabbi Mendel Torum of Rymanóv (d. 1814), one of the great Hasidic saints, throws a striking light on the whole problem of the relationship between authority and mysticism. Let me try to interpret this statement. The revelation given to Israel on Mount Sinai, is, as everyone knows, a sharply defined set of doctrines, a summons to the human community; its meaning is perfectly clear, and it is certainly not a mystical formula open to infinite interpretation. But what, the question arises, is the truly divine element in

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this revelation? The question is already discussed in the Talmud. When the children of Israel received the Ten Commandments, what could they actually hear, and what did they hear? Some maintained that all the Commandments were spoken to the children of Israel directly by the divine voice. Others said that only the first two Commandments—"I am The Lord thy God" and "Thou shalt have no other gods before me"—were communicated directly. Then the people were overwhelmed, they could no longer endure the divine voice, and therefore were obliged to receive the remaining Commandments through Moses. Moses alone was able to withstand the divine voice, and it was he who repeated in a human voice those statements of supreme authority that are the Ten Commandments.

This conception of Moses as interpreter of the divine voice for the people was developed much more radically by Maimonides,* whose ideas Rabbi Mendel of Rymanóv carried to their ultimate conclusion. In Rabbi Mendel's view, not even the first two Commandments were revealed directly to the whole people of Israel. All that Israel heard was the *aleph* with which in the Hebrew text the first Commandment begins, the *aleph* of the word *anokhi*, "I." This strikes me as a highly remarkable statement. In Hebrew the consonant *aleph* represents nothing more than the position taken by the larynx when a word begins with a vowel. Thus the *aleph* may be said to denote the source of all articulate sound, and indeed the Kabbalists always regarded it as the spiritual root of all other letters, encompassing in its essence the whole alphabet and hence all other elements of human discourse. To hear the *aleph* is to hear next to nothing; it is the preparation for all audible language, but in itself conveys no determinate, specific meaning. With his daring statement that the actual revelation to Israel consisted only of the *aleph*, then, Rabbi Mendel transformed the revelation on Mount Sinai into a mystical revelation, pregnant with infinite meaning, but without specific meaning. In order to become a foundation of religious authority, it had to be translated into human language, and that is what Moses did. In this light every statement on which authority is grounded would become a human interpretation, however valid and exalted, of something that transcends it.† Once in history a mystical experience was imparted to a whole nation and formed a bond between that nation and God. But the truly divine element in this revelation, the immense *aleph* was not in itself sufficient to express the divine message, and in itself it was more than the community could bear. Only the prophet was empowered to communicate the meaning of this inarticulate voice to the community. It is mystical experience which conceives and gives birth to authority.

* In *Guide to the Perplexed* (II, 33) he puts forward the opinion that wherever, in passages dealing with the revelation on Mount Sinai, the children of Israel are said to have heard words, it is meant that they heard the (inarticulate) sound of the voice, but that Moses heard the words (in their meaningful articulation) and communicated them.

† This opinion, as my friend Ernst Simon has called to my attention, is expressed with great precision and in a form suggesting the language of the mystics, by Franz Rosenzweig in a letter of 1925 to Martin Buber. Rosenzweig denies that the revelation on Mount Sinai gave laws. "The only immediate content of revelation . . . is revelation itself; with *va-yered* [he came down, Exod. 19:20] it is essentially complete, with *va-yedabber* [he spoke, Exod. 20:1] interpretation sets in, and all the more so with *'anokhi* [the "I" at the beginning of the Ten Commandments]." Cf. Franz Rosenzweig, *Briefe*, Berlin, 1935, p. 535; English translation in F. Rosenzweig, *On Jewish Learning*, ed. N. N. Glatzer, New York, 1955, p. 118.

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WILLIE MORRIS

LEGISLATING IN TEXAS

A PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE is a fertile source for a writer. So many crimes are committed there daily in an atmosphere of a service club social, and the human flaws are so accessible. Sometimes it is too much for one to bear, the more or less constant spectacle of legislators backed by the sanction of powerful business lobbies frustrating the few good and intelligent men who are willing to labor in the maw of small-time politics. Until 1955, when a handful of young intellectuals, led by Ronnie Dugger, began writing about it in the *Texas Observer,* the Texas legislature was seldom expected to be taken seriously. It was a circus of ordinary follies, a lane-end; stagnating in the backwaters of provincial politics, it was rendered bloodless by the stereotyped formulas of the big-city newspapers. The state had produced a distinguished Speaker of the U.S. House and a Senate majority leader who already had his sights on the Presidency, men with towering national influence and the guarded instincts of superior professionals. At the state level they had charted a subtle course somewhat between and above the conservative business establishment on the one hand, and the growing postwar liberalism on the other; as far as the legislature of their home state was concerned, it was less embarrassing for Speaker Rayburn and Senator Johnson to avoid it than to do anything about it. The place had had its heroic moments: the occasional populist calling for vengeance on Yankee bankers, the tiny group of reformers rallying against the giants of oil and gas for drawing the colony dry and leaving a pittance in return. A rigorous conservatism not only called the plays, it set the rules for debate. The dramas and sorrows of this curious institution had been left to the interpretations of tired newspapermen whose sensibilities had corroded from too much exposure to a diet of daily deceit, mostly crippled cynics who were unable to tell an irony from an obscene story.

My first exposure to the Texas legislature at the working level was in 1960, when I returned from England to become editor of the *Observer.* I was no novice to politics at the time, though I think I still vaguely suspected there might be some *science* lurking in it, even in a state capitol. Four years before, as editor of the great student daily at the state university, I had erred into editorializing about state politics, particularly about its twin deities, oil and gas. I suppose the authorities had not expected a gentle-natured American boy to overreach into areas ruled by hidden divinities; a student editor in Texas can blaspheme against the Holy Spirit and the Apostle Paul, but irreverence stops at the well-head. The agitation which followed was not edifying: a university president as frightened as a high-school principal, professors of advertising deploring "propaganda," regents making formal statements which might have emanated from Mussolini's ministry of information, and old J. Frank Dobie saying the whole lot of them cared as much about intellectual enlightenment as a razorback sow about Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn."

But the state legislature itself was something more directly human, irrelevant to ivory tower polemics, and I was simply not prepared for it. It is difficult to convey exactly the way I reacted those first days there, but I remember it as a kind of physical sickness, the result of a continuing outrage, for which even writing was no outlet. I don't think this could be attributed to any moral righteousness, nor to an undue naïveté. I knew my Lincoln Steffens, and I had more than a passing knowledge of the Whig House of Commons, which appealed to my decadent Mississippi instincts; I had always had a curious liking for politicians, and if the preference were between a sanctimonious old bastard with the right ideas and a politican with none at all, I would not have hesitated. Despite all this, I remained in a state of unusual anger. I would spend most of a working day wandering around the floor of both houses, eavesdropping on the big lobbyists, interviewing the strategists behind the legislative monstrosities which passed as conservatism, and drinking interminable beers with the representatives of what the *Dallas Morning News* called the "liberal-leftist axis." What I saw and heard, how-

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ever, did less damage to my equilibrium than it did to Bob Sherrill's, my associate editor. Sherrill had been around. He was born in Frogtown, Georgia, a place which no longer exists, educated in California, and he had worked as a newspaper carrier, a janitor, a house painter, and a water analyst. He was a veteran reporter who had written, in the old tradition, for some twenty-five papers all over America. When he grew tired of one town, or began to hate an editor's guts too much for his own sense of balance, he would simply depart for another, usually in the dead of night. Sherrill was a painter and a poet, and had once worked briefly on a Ph.D. at an Ivy League school before concluding that the city room of any middle-sized daily was more civilized and usually more literate. He was also a cynic, but with a soft underspot he almost never showed, and he joined the *Texas Observer,* as he told me at the time, to see if idealism existed, and if so whether it was worth the effort. He had had almost no experience with politics, which he regarded as a form of athletics, but he had covered more rapes, muggings, frauds, murders, fornications, and mutilations than most men of comparable sensibility. Those first days in the legislature Sherrill would station himself in the most inaccessible corner of whatever room or chamber he happened to be in. I would often spot him across the house floor, lurking in the shadows of some statue, a sneer on his face. Sometimes he would sit on his haunches in a corner, the way farmers do outside the old general stores of crossroads towns, rolling his eyes straight up to the ceiling, cursing silently to himself. Gradually he would begin to move among the members on the floor, taking notes and shaking his great head. Our paths would occasionally cross in these peregrinations. Sherrill would whisper, "Jesus Christ," or "Shi-*yeet,*" and then recount to me something he had just watched or been told. I think he was ready to fight. Once he accosted me to talk about the activities of one particular big-city delegation which had five members, four of whom got around in wheelchairs. "I've been counting," Sherrill said, "and the ones from —— are all invalids, except R——, and that son-of-a-bitch is a *mental* invalid." Sherrill came to scoff, but I think he remained as long as he did because there was so much to scoff at.

RECENTLY I HAVE been going back over the notes I took at the time to recall what most impressed me. In the first week there was an important committee hearing on appropriations. The chairman, a rural demagogue who liked to dress in the nattiest Ivy fashions—perhaps to help himself forget that in his constituency he represented more cows, centipedes, and horseflies than people—spent several minutes berating a witness for what he called undue "lobbying." The witness's lobbying had consisted of pointing out that the State of Texas was appropriating several hundred thousand dollars for advertising the wildlife activities of its game and fish commission, $30,000 for financing a quail hatchery, and not a penny of a requested $10,000 for allowing a state council on migrant labor to remain in existence to make recommendations on vehicle safety, child labor laws, and minimum housing standards. That same afternoon I went to a committee hearing on the senate side, where officials testified that the State of Texas did not have a single juvenile parole officer. The director of the Negro detention home said many of the children with no parents and nowhere to go when they got out, would "often develop some problem to remain in reform school." A state senator suggested, and his colleagues laughed in good fun, that perhaps they should put some of these delinquents under the animal wildlife board. The director of the state's youth services testified at another hearing the next day, "We simply don't have a single bed for neglected Negro children in this state." "Well," a senator asked, "where do they go?" "Your guess is as good as mine, Senator," the director replied. The director later told me that these Negro orphans with no place to go had sometimes been sent to reform schools with hardened offenders, because these were the only state facilities which could take care of them.

Lobbyists for oil and gas, whom the old hands called "the Knights of Congress Avenue," usually outnumbered state senators at tax hearings. A joint session one morning heard a special address from one of those perambulating preachers in which the Southwest seems to abound; he was warmly applauded when he said the profit motive is the last good human instinct, Jesus upheld the profit motive, and "What's good for Kaiser Steel is good for the country." Fifty-thousand-a-year corporation lawyers flocked to committee hearings, especially on taxes and appropriations, to argue their favorite theme: "You can't tax a corporation; a corporation is *all* of us." For years a conservative governor had tried to get the legislature to pass an escheats bill—or abandoned property act—of the kind that had already been enacted by some thirty-six states, and in a debate which was a prelude to its being defeated again one man argued, in high seriousness: "Someone said this escheats bill was around a thousand years old. Let's think just a minute who it was that started it—the King of England.* Gentlemen, I don't believe in this law." In response to an appeal at a committee hearing for stronger school attendance laws for Mexican-American children, who then averaged only three-and-a-half years of schooling, one especially outspoken female legislator, who reflected the majority sentiment on the committee, said, "If more children had to work younger today, they might *appreciate* lux-

* This may have been that arch-radical, King Edward III (1327-1377).

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uries." One morning a bill advocating a fifty-cent-an-hour minimum wage for Texas got 33 votes out of 150 in the lower house. Proposed tax increases on oil and gas were lucky to reach the floor. Occasionally they did, to be defeated.

The loss to Texas of its natural heritage, sold for pottage, has been one of the great shames of a state in which social services contrast so dramatically with basic economic wealth. If an enlightened tax program had been applied to oil and gas two decades ago, Texas today might have the best and most progressive state government in America. It is in this perspective that the constant destruction of decent appropriations takes on deeper shades of meaning than in the legislatures of other, less endowed states. The reformers in the Texas legislature never missed an opportunity to argue that theirs was a state which ranked first in the nation in oil, with about half the nation's underground reserves; first in gas, with over 45 per cent of the nation's underground reserves; first in cattle, first in cotton, first in everything from livestock and mohair to goats and pecans. Yet in basic social services the State of Texas ranked first in its caseload per state social worker; 41st in old age pensions; 40th in public assistance programs in general, with almost three-quarters of these funds from the federal government; 40th in literacy; 42nd in aid to dependent children; 50th in vocational rehabilitation for injured workers; close to the bottom in educational services. Despite its impressive natural beauty, its state parks were a travesty, and it could be judged nothing less than criminal in its negligence of the mentally ill.

Such arguments, made almost in desperation, were greeted, depending on the moment, with smugness, high hilarity, inattention, or a simple lack of intelligence. On the *Observer* we were sometimes overcome with futility and anger, the flaws seemed too great to be measured in terms of our own private contempt, and the sheer enormity of the task of reform from within the system made our occasional optimism seem a waste of good energy. "If Texas won't," it was said bitterly, "then Washington will." The most intelligent of the reformers knew that the most crucial economic demand was to keep chipping away at the tax wall set up by oil and gas; the odds were overwhelming. It had become political legend, after a mere ten years, how a group of tax reformers patched together a coalition in 1951 for a "gas-gathering" tax. Friends of the oil and gas interests forced an extra session in the hope that the five dollar per diem pay would force the "tax-eaters," as the papers called them, to disband and go home. But the gashouse gang, as they became known, pooled their money and rented an old house on Nueces Street in Austin. They kept going on free food from their sympathizers, and sometimes on bourbon from the liquor lobbyists (the best and kindest of their breed) who mainly appreciated the show they were putting on. Eventually the gashouse gang got their tax, but they had legislated on a shaky principle, and it was not the work of an influential anthropomorphic God who has doubts about Standard of New Jersey that their tax was struck down as unconstitutional.

II

Bob Eckhardt, a legislator from Houston, once remarked to me that the state capitol in Austin was "built for giants and inhabited by pygmies." The legislature was starkly out of character with its surroundings: the big, distinctive old building on a rise overlooking Congress Avenue, the broad lawn with the gnarled oaks, the portraits of the Alamo, of Mirabeau Lamar, Sam Houston, Stephen F. Austin, Jim Bowie, Davy Crockett, Jim Hogg, Sam Rayburn. Both houses, as elsewhere, were gerrymandered beyond coherence. The lower one had 150 members, the state senate 31; they were from El Paso on the west to Texarkana on the east, from Mexico on the south almost to Kansas on the north. Of these 181, there were no Negroes. There were about eight *mexicanos*, young men educated in the night schools or sometimes not at all, angry and intelligent and willing to take on the best legal talent the corporation could offer.

The great majority of the legislators were white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant, yet one would have to go to the national Congress, of all other American parliamentary bodies, to find a legislature which encompassed so many differing regions and values. There were a bare handful of Republicans, new arrivals who usually dressed better, disowned Lincoln, and were prone to caucus in phone booths. Their idol was the Arizona Senator, and ideologically they occupied the low ground somewhere to the right of Ethelred the Unready, though not without company from the ranks of their Democratic colleagues. The provincial political manner, a back-slapping exuberance coated with an uneasy literacy, dominated the place. An East Texas racist could attack a man in the morning as an enemy of the commonwealth, and ask his advice in the afternoon on whether his son should go to "one of them Ivy League schools." There were men with meanness written on every feature, heavy, red-faced meanness, men you wouldn't want to cross if you could avoid it, and there were decent, friendly, and well-educated men who sought one's respect and attention; it took time to recognize that the votes of the decent and friendly ones against social legislation, against Negroes, and against any meaningful taxes counted as much and usually more than the votes of the straightforward reprobates.

There we were, existing theoretically within the old institutions: majority vote, most of the time,

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free speech, and the dictates of an informal country courtesy. It was good to be a gentleman, even when it was not consistently possible. Sometimes, as in *Lord of the Flies*, someone threw away the conch shell. One night, in a bitter floor debate in the lower house, one legislator pulled the cord out of the amplifier system, another hit him from the blindside with a tackle; there was mass pushing, hitting, clawing, and exchanges about one another's wives, mistresses, and forebears. Sweethearts and wives, who were allowed on the floor with friends and secretaries cowered near the desks. In the middle of the brawl, a barbershop quartet of legislators quickly formed at the front of the chamber and, like a dance band during a saloon fight, sang "I Had a Dream, Dear." This was an exceptional occurrence, but I recall it took place during an interim in which the parliamentarian was looking up a complex point in parliamentary procedure.

The state senate, on the other hand, was more like a mortuary parlor, which befitted an institution whose greatest contribution had been the sure death of any faintly progressive piece of legislation. It was a plush green chamber, just large enough to accommodate 31 senators—so small that in its earlier days the business lobby could control the entire state government by more or less owning thirteen senators.* Three or four senators would laugh and banter for hours about whether non-resident brewers should pay state fees, or discuss the jurisdiction of notaries public, or how corpses could best be diverted for medical science, all while loan shark bills rotted for lack of a hearing, air pollution bills for lack of a sponsor, and while the two or three first-team leaders worked efficiently behind the scenes to make sure no pipelines taxes ever reached the floor.

The first time I went into the state senate for a floor debate, I wrote down my reactions: "A young reporter turned to me and asked, 'How can I tell the truth about what it's *really* like over here in a news story?' Under the format of a daily newspaper it is impossible. A good journalist with a mind of his own can see right through the deceits. He knows the man is lying, and he knows the *man* knows he is lying. It is like a game. Indignant outbursts are accompanied by sly grins; laughter creeps into the most heartfelt speeches. Nothing whatever has the ring of truth." One night while the senate was considering a gas tax bill, I was in a private club with a well-known county judge noted chiefly for his capacity for whiskey sours. He began exploring the place and came back and told me, "I've just uncovered a covey of old birds." He led me to a back room and pulled the curtains. Seated at the table were the chairman and five members of the tax committee of the state senate and the four biggest oil and gas lobbyists in Texas. "Senator R——," the judge shouted, sticking his head through the curtain, "y'awl decidin' on that gas tax?" The senator turned and said, "Judge, it's got us all up in the air."

III

A MAN COULD NOT have edited a newspaper with the acute degree of contempt one felt in those first days. As often happens to people deeply involved in everyday politics, I think I relaxed, or perhaps weakened, as a means of survival. In the Texas legislature at the time, even when one saw every human decency violated, and many of the violations actually put into law, you learned that there was little future in indulging outrage and anger at the personal level. Otherwise one's daily existence among politicians would have consisted of more or less uninterrupted physical violence. The experience of calling a man a turncoat or a scoundrel in an editorial and then shaking his hand and exchanging banal pleasantries on the house floor the next day was never a comfortable one, but it somehow kept a balance between anarchy and the parliamentary forms. It also helped when an editor built up his private intelligence network to a perfection such that the opposition began ratting on each other, a practice which was indispensable on a journal like ours. There is a myth, and it dies hard, which says that politicians who vote alike are natural friends, but in a roomful of like-minded country representatives there are jealousies of an intensity that in contrast would make the court of the Sun King seem like Our Town.

But the country politician has a remarkable resilience. I once subjected an important lobbyist to a half-hour of detailed questioning concerning a certain malpractice on which I had been reliably informed (in this case by the Governor of Texas, who called me into his mansion

* In this regard, the techniques of the big lobbies have changed considerably. It wasn't too long ago in Texas that the lobbyists mainly resorted to the "three B's"—bourbon, beef, and blondes. The methodology has become more sophisticated. On important issues the business lobby has gone outside the legislature to cultivate grassroots public-relations campaigns among a legislator's constituents, especially the more wealthy and influential. In this way it has learned to pressure the individual legislator where he hurts the most: his fear of defeat in the next election. In the Texas legislature in 1961, a state sales tax was finally passed after extensive work of this kind in the constituencies. The oil and gas lobby was the strongest force behind the sales tax, organizing something of a front group called "Citizens for a Sales Tax" which actually asked for small contributions from average citizens. John Kenneth Galbraith might have been pleased by the results, but the methods would doubtless have appalled him. If Galbraith disguised his Harvard credentials and became a Texas legislator, say from Lawn or Muleshoe, I imagine he would favor more taxes on oil and gas, and he might even conclude after a time that Texans as a whole are not an affluent lot.

The change to more sophisticated lobbying techniques is probably taking place along much the same lines in other states, just as it has in Washington. In Texas the custom of the three B's simply lasted longer. There is still considerable skullduggery; it is just more civilized.

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in the dead of night and sneaked me through the back door to tell it), and afterward the man cordially asked me to have a drink with him at his club. Ronnie Dugger once called a politician a crook in an editorial, and two days later the man crashed a dinner party at Dugger's house. I expected my shots to have greater effect; I hoped to see my victims rage in vengeance or in guilt, to come at me with a coal-black .45 the way they do in Pulitzer citations, but they never did. When I ran a list of the forty-five ranking diehards in the Texas legislature, based on a voting analysis which cited votes against everything from free toilets for school children to industrial safety bills, one legislator—later promoted to Speaker of the Texas House—came to me and demanded a correction: he had voted against all these measures and his name, "goddamn you" (as he patted me on the back) had not been included. A Texas politician with a tenth-grade education has hidden springs of sophistication in such matters. I found him less violent about politics, both in the physical and psychic sense, than is the average young matron with a college diploma and an executive husband who thinks Goldwater could salvage our honor.

After a time one began to see such politicians, quite simply, as a reflection of the broader system. The quality of human matter in most state legislatures has never been epic, and an apportionment based on acreage rather than people has tended to tolerate similar vast and empty expanses in representative epicrania. This legislature was no worse than many, considerably more entertaining than most, and in its young men, like myself, it encouraged a true sense of being close to the source. They were human beings, Texas people, and fairly typical products of Baptist Waco, racist East Texas, or the more disturbingly reactionary sections of the Panhandle. They were lesser men, most of them, than the men who organized the game, and although they moved about like barnyard fowls in their glory, there was something rather pathetic in their performance. It was difficult if not impossible for many of the country boys to resist the courting they got in the city: the plush hotels and parties, official attentions, little courtesies from important people, the first-name talk with the bankers and oilmen up from home. One of them had once delivered a lengthy diatribe against a tax bill on the floor of the lower house, an oration riddled with distortions and strange simplicities. I went over to talk with him about his exercise in logic, which would doubtless be on the front-pages of most of the dailies the next day, and which had obviously been successful in helping marshal an impressive majority. After several minutes of conversation I made an unexpected discovery: he had the brain of a small bird. He had almost no grasp of the issue or its consequences, or even of the implications of the speech he had just made. He really did not matter one way or the other, he had spoken his piece and voted, and he preferred to forget the whole business and be a jocular companion.

In this environment it took me a few weeks to learn that the heavy hand was not only ineffective, it was usually irrelevant. Humor was essentially a way of surviving, and it was no coincidence that every good man I knew in the political life of the state had a deep and abiding sense of the absurd. Humor also was an offensive weapon, the best way of expressing one's contempt. An editorial could go on for 5000 words against a charlatan or a liar, one could quote every authority from St. Thomas Aquinas to Murray Kempton, but the barb or the burlesque was the better way to stalk an enemy. The country legislator is filled high with his own importance, he esteems his own peculiar cynicism, but he seems deathly afraid of humor when it is employed against himself. For this reason the annual Oscars awarded by the *Texas Observer* included: Oil and Gas Man of the Year, Oil and Gas Rookie of the Year, Pipelines' Utility Man, The Standard of New Jersey Good Conduct Medal, Most Likely to Secede, the Wall Street Combat Ribbon with Oakleaf Clusters, DAR Revolutionary of the Year, the Most Outstanding Swinger of Birchers, the Frates Seeligson Purple Heart (named after one of their associates who had unexpectedly fallen in combat the previous election), Neanderthal of the Year, and Most Disappointing Neanderthal of the Year (for moving back and forth too indecisively between the Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon periods).

IV

THE PREPONDERANCE of mediocrities in the capitol could only deepen one's appreciation of the good men. They came from likely places—Houston, San Antonio, and El Paso—as well as from the most unlikely ones: Roby, Jacksonville, Denison, Refugio, Tulia, Alvin, Trinity, Goliad, Liberty. I think first of Bob Eckhardt, a gentle and learned man, undoubtedly one of the outstanding men in state politics in America. The role of the anecdote, the story, is a powerful one in Southern politics, and Eckhardt was a genius in the milieu; his humor was usually sad and quiet, like Lincoln's. He wore a big hat and had a thick Southern drawl. Once I asked him, "Eckhardt, why do you wear that dirty old hat?" and he said, "A man with a hat like that and a drawl like this *couldn't* be a liberal." He told the story about how a voter in Houston walked up to his mother, who was helping him campaign, and said, "Mrs. Eckhardt, we're favorably inclined toward your son, but we're worried about his views on the race issue." She replied, "Oh, I'm afraid that's my fault. I raised him to be a Christian." Once, at the end of a floor

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debate in which the conservatives, taking their cue from the Goldwater primer, were trying to cut state aid money to illegitimate children, Eckhardt went to the microphone and said, quietly, "I'm not so much concerned with the natural bastards as I am with the self-made ones." The only time I saw Eckhardt angry, under the most trying conditions, was after the conservatives had butchered his oil and gas tax by adding several unconstitutional amendments. He marched up to Judge "Twinkletoes" Foster, the biggest oil lobbyist in town, shook his fist, and, in a voice trembling with child-like rage, said, "You ruined my tax, Judge. You made it unconstitutional, and you *know* it." Otherwise, Eckhardt kept his balance, even when he was one of only two men in the Texas legislature who refused to vote for a resolution praising the House Un-American Activities Committee. His weapons were a relentless logic, a towering dignity, and the power of humor. He knew more oil and gas law than all the lobbyists in Austin; one afternoon I saw him take on every major lobbyist and lawyer the pipelines could muster in a committee hearing and plainly best them all. Fancy lawyers who specialized in testimony before the important finance committees regarded him uneasily. The one-night stand corporation defenders who would fly in from the East or the Midwest to make buffoons of the backwoods reformers on particularly dangerous tax legislation had been forewarned about him. I heard on good authority that these perambulating lobbyists, masters of ridicule, condescension, and the complexities of the law, were tipped off about Eckhardt by their bosses in approximately this manner: "Now when you go down to Austin to testify against this franchise tax, there'll be a fellow on that tax committee named Eckhardt, with a drawl like a dirt farmer, but when he starts asking questions, you'd better stop and think about the answers. He knows more than we do." When one of these lobbyists for a large paper corporation warned a tax committee one day that liberal taxers had wrecked many another state, that his company contributed a lot more to Texas than Texas contributed to it, and that a tax revision would drive his corporation to ruin, Eckhardt asked:

"Mr. Combs, can you tell the committee why your company decided to come to Texas?"

"What do you mean, Mr. Eckhardt?"

"Well, can you tell us why you decided to locate in Texas rather than, say Albuquerque, or Wichita, Kansas, or Oklahoma City?"

"I don't quite see what you're driving at, sir."

"I wonder," Eckhardt said, "if it had anything to do with water and trees" (pronounced *whaa-tu* and *treeehs*). He then proceeded, in the most brilliant statement I have ever heard on the subject, to attack big corporations which "come down here and take our natural resources out of the earth, and take our water and our trees, and drive their big trucks on our roads, and send their children to our schools, and send you lobbyists down here to our legislature, and don't even begin to give us a proper social payment in return." On another occasion there was a hearing on an industrial safety law. Texas was the only industrial state with no regulation, and the sponsors of a safety bill tried to argue that some one thousand workers were killed on the job every year, and many thousands injured. Witnesses from the corporations argued that it is impossible to "legislate safety." One of them said, "It's the workers, not the machinery or management, that's always at fault." To this Eckhardt replied, "Well, you know in the lumber mills, those big hooks that come down and grab a log and pull it into the saw, sometimes they grab a worker and pull *him* into the saw. But I guess you'd call that worker failure, because the machinery was workin' just right, and it sawed up that worker just like he was a log."

THERE was N——, the most sensitive one of all. He represented a Mexican-American constituency near the border, where his father owned a town. He would sit off in a corner, at times on his haunches next to Sherrill under the portrait of Sam Houston, sipping gin from a 7-Up bottle. He was a member of one committee that had an especially long history of razing professors, nonfundamentalist preachers, and intellectuals. It was probably the most racist and xenophobic of all the legislative committees, and N—— would stand off on the peripheries drinking from the 7-Up bottle. The only time he ever spoke seemed to be out of some final desperation. The rural conservatives, to put the city liberals on the spot, had introduced a bill which would require all professors and teachers in state-supported schools "to acknowledge the existence of a Supreme Being." At the hearing on the bill, the sponsor was testifying on its behalf. One of N——'s friends on the committee interrupted to read Jefferson's Act Establishing Religious Freedom in Virginia.

"Well, that's just fine," the sponsor, a gargoyle named W .T. Oliver, replied.

"Well, W.T., it looks like we'll either have to be for you or for Tom Jefferson," N—— said.

"Yessir," W.T. said, "that seems to be the choice."

"W.T.," N—— said, "you're makin' it awful hard on us."

There were those with memorable eccentricities, like G——, who was still relatively young in a seedy way but had spent enough years in those environs on the losing side to deserve being shell-shocked. He was a fighting reformer from the old school, and his idols were Maury Maverick, Sr., George Norris, and the elder La Follette. G—— campaigned for re-election from a sidewalk café in Paris against a blind female justice of the peace; his platform was "one-hundred-per-cent

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Americanism." G—— was the only one I knew who wrote IOU's at Hattie's, the local whorehouse. He was also the only politician in Texas who read the New York *Times* every day, the *Nation,* the *New Republic,* the *Progressive,* the *Washington Post,* and the *Hudson Review.* He scored his highest triumph one day when a visiting Eastern intellectual, out from New York to ascertain if the rest of the country were, as rumor had it, inhabited, glanced at the newspapers and journals on his desk and whispered, "My God! A civilized man in the Texas House of Representatives!" G—— and N—— once rented a house where the liberals could meet, and named it "the Russian Embassy." G—— confided to me at the Russian Embassy one night, "You know, a politician's *got* to sell out to somebody, it's just a matter of pickin' the right people to sell out to. I've sold out to the truckers and to liquor. I may be their property, but I've never yet cast a vote against the people. The truckers aren't a bad group, and the good thing about the liquor boys is that when you vote for the truckers when you really don't want to, you can go off and get drunk about it free of charge."

There was McGregor, an intellectual who was elected at the age of twenty-one by business interests, and who in three sessions became the smartest and most articulate of the minority. There was Henry Gonzalez, now a Congressman, who broke the national filibuster record in the state senate on a racist bill, and who used to describe a Latin-American as "a Mexican with a poll tax." There were B—— and B——, both of whom had been in the state legislature for ten years beginning when they were twenty-one. Once they got so angry after being defeated by a particular lobby on an important vote one afternoon, that they broke into the lobbyist's house that night and stole three dozen sirloin steaks from the deep freeze. And, finally, there was Spears, the toughest fighter of them all and the one who will probably go the farthest, who told me he won on a piece of legislation "because I got mad and I stayed mad." Once, after a bad defeat, he pointed to the lobbyists in the gallery and shouted, "Today was the Alamo, but San Jacinto is yet to come."

But San Jacinto seldom came. One measured victory, not in terms of winning, but in the few additional votes picked up in defeat. In the lower house there was a big electric voting board, green lights for aye, red for nay, and we got used to seeing the same lights, the angry flashing nays, beginning with Alaniz and ending with Zbranek, always scattered and outnumbered.

It sometimes seemed like a charade, gathering in the gloomy old house where the liberals met to dissect their most recent defeat. What went wrong? Why did somebody desert? Who would handle the fight against the racists' newest bill the next morning? Empty beer cans and cigarette butts littered the floor. Tempers would flare; there seemed little or no leadership, no focus. Some conservative would telephone and ask them to join a celebration party in a downtown hotel: "You boys take yourselves too goddamned seriously." But after awhile even Johnny Garcia from the San Antonio West Side could forget politics and devote himself to serious, uninterrupted beer drinking, the way beer is taken in Texas.

YET this was not all. Sometimes, by surprise, on some lazy afternoon the chamber would suddenly break into eloquent, angry exchanges, going straight to the dilemmas of our politics. The bill under debate might be nothing, but Eckhardt would begin with a sad lament for something gone wrong, then shift imperceptibly into a brilliant exposition of all the things that had contributed to the failure of state government in Texas and elsewhere. This would move Spears, who would follow with a defiant diatribe full of emotion and fight; then would come N——, with a terse set of questions aimed at the conservatives, challenging their credentials and their future efficacy and warning them that even their drivers' licenses would soon expire; and then G——, with a memorable story illustrating the follies of inaction. By this time they would all be on the floor shouting for recognition; someone would have told B——, sitting back in the rotunda smoking a cigar and trying to arrange something with a sexpot of a secretary, that his friends had the floor and were fighting mad. He would rush to the Speaker's apartments to get Kennard, sitting at the window drinking bourbon and staring into space; the two would go to the floor and engage in mock questions and answers mimicking a lobbyist. McGregor might get up and, to illustrate a point about the race issue, exclaim, "The ground, gentlemen, is bloody and full of guilt where you were born," a poetic outburst as comprehensible to most of the assembly as the later plays of Bertolt Brecht or the cantos of Ezra Pound. Caldwell would talk about, of all things, the common law and the Constitution of the United States, and Whitfield would quote King John at Runnymede or the Emancipation Proclamation.

At this point, as one got some brief foretaste of what a radically reapportioned legislature might promise, the conservatives would have given up, for they were outclassed if not outnumbered. The press table would be deserted; the specialists for the dailies would see little consequence in the libs talking into the thin air; but under the portrait of Sam Houston, Sherrill would be taking notes.

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LESLIE H. FARBER

"I'M SORRY, DEAR"

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.
—Genesis

Lust is more abstract than logic; it seeks (hope triumphing over experience) for some purely sexual, hence purely imaginary, conjunction of an impossible maleness with an impossible femaleness.
—C. S. Lewis

THE MODERN dialogue which furnishes me my title is practiced throughout the Western world. As a theme with only a limited number of variations, it cannot sustain much repetition: familiarity breeds silence; although never really abandoned, the script quickly becomes implicit. When reduced to a dumb show—or perhaps no more than a monosyllabic token—it still remains faithful to its pathetic premise. However, for the purposes of introduction I shall try to represent its essence in a wholly explicit manner. The man speaks first.

"Did you?"

"Did *you*? You *did*, didn't you?"

"Yes, I'm afraid I—Oh, I'm sorry! I *am* sorry. I know how it makes you feel."

"Oh, don't worry about it. I'm sure I'll quiet down after a while."

"I'm *so* sorry, dearest. Let me help you."

"I'd rather you didn't."

"But, I . . ."

"What good is it when you're just—when you don't really want to? You know perfectly well, if you don't *really* want to, it doesn't work."

"But I *do really* want to! I *want* to! Believe me. It *will* work, you'll see. Only let me!"

"Please, couldn't we just forget it? For now the thing is done, finished. Besides, it's not really that important. My tension always wears off eventually. And anyhow—maybe next time it'll be different."

"Oh, it *will*, I *know* it will. Next time I won't be so tired or so eager. I'll make sure of that. Next time it's going to be *fine*! . . . But about tonight—I'm sorry, dear."

Unhappily, no end to talking and trying for our pathetic lovers. To deaden self-consciousness they may turn to alcohol or sedatives, seeking the animal indifference that is unencumbered with hesitations, reservations, grievances—in short, all those human tangles that create the sexual abyss they will themselves to bridge. To delay his moment, to quicken hers, they may try to assist the chemicals by thinking of other matters—football games and cocktail parties—in order finally to arrive at that mutual consummation which, hopefully, will prove their sufficiency unto each other, if not their love. All the strategies and prescriptions of sexology that have often failed them in the past are not cast aside but stubbornly returned to, if only because in such an impasse there is nothing else. Instead of alcohol or drugs or irrelevant reveries they may—in solitude or mutuality—resort to sex itself as their sedative, intending the first try to spend their energies just enough to dull self-consciousness and thicken their passion to the "spontaneity" necessary for their second and final attempt. Although normally truthful people, our lovers are continually tempted by deception and simulation: he may try to conceal his moment, she to simulate hers—as they stalk their equalitarian ideal. It can happen that they will achieve simultaneity by means of one or several or none of these devices. But their success—in the midst of their congratulations—will be as dispiriting as their failures. For one thing the joy the lovers sought in this manner will be either absent or too fictitious to be believed. Furthermore, once the moment has subsided they must reckon with the extraordinary efforts that brought it about—efforts that appear too extraordinary for ordinary day-to-day existence. Thus does it happen that success may bring as much as or more pathos than failure. And always lying between them will be the premise borrowed from romanticism: if they *really* loved each other it would work. Small wonder, then, as self-pity and bitterness accumulate, that their musings—if not their ac-

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tions—turn to adultery: a heightened situation which promises freedom from the impingements of ordinary sexual life. Or, pushed gradually past heightening, past hope, they may even come to abstinence, which can seem—with some irony—the least dishonorable course.

MY CONVICTION is that over the last fifty years sex has for the most part lost its viability as a human experience. I do not mean there is any danger it will cease to be practiced—that it will be put aside like other Victorian bric-a-brac. The hunger will remain, perhaps even increase, and human beings will continue to couple with as much fervor as they can provoke, all the while that the human possibilities of sex will grow ever more elusive. Such couplings will be poultices after the fact: they will further extend the degradation of sex that has resulted from its ever-increasing bondage to the modern will. To those first pioneers at the turn of the century—sexologists, psychoanalysts, political champions of woman's suffrage—"sexual emancipation" seemed a stirring and optimistic cause. Who could have imagined then, as the battle was just beginning, how ironic victory would be: sex was emancipated, true, but emancipated from all of life—except the will—and subsequently exalted as the measure of existence.

At this point I think it only fair that I commit myself, even if briefly, on how sex was, is, or could be a viable human experience. My view is not that of St. Augustine—that man, by reason of the Fall, is necessarily subject to the lust of concupiscence. Nor can I subscribe, at the other extreme, to the position of the Church of England, as reported at the Lambeth Conference in 1958: "The new freedom of sexuality in our time is . . . a gate to a new depth and joy in personal relationship between husband and wife." Of the erotic life Martin Buber has remarked that in no other realm are dialogue and monologue so mingled and opposed. I would agree that any attempt to offer a normative description would have to include precisely such mingling and opposition. Even if we place it optimally within an ongoing domestic world of affection, in which sex bears some relation, however slight, to procreation, our task is still the difficult one of maintaining that sex is both utterly important and utterly trivial. Sex may be a hallowing and renewing experience, but more often it will be distracting, coercive, playful, frivolous, discouraging, dutiful, even boring. On the one hand it tempts man to omnipotence, while on the other it roughly reminds him of his mortality. Over and over again it mocks rationality, only to be mocked in turn at the very instant it insists its domain is solely within the senses. Though it promises the suspension of time, no other event so sharply advises us of the oppressiveness of time. Sex offers itself as an alternative world, but when the act is over and the immodesty of this offering is exposed, it is the sheer worldliness of the world we briefly relinquished and must now re-enter that has to be confronted anew. Residing no longer in the same room which first enclosed us, we now lie in another room with another topography—a room whose surfaces, textures, corners, knobs have an otherness as absolute and formidable as the duties and promises which nag us with their temporal claims. What began as relief from worldly concern ends by returning us to the world with a metaphysical, if unsettling, clarity.

Though sex often seems to be morality's adversary, it more often brings sharply in its wake moral discriminations that previously had not been possible. Because the pleasure of sex is always vulnerable to splitting into *pleasuring* and *being pleasured*, the nature of pleasure itself, as well as the relation between pleasure and power, are called into question. If pleasuring is the overpowering concern, intimations of the actual and immediate experience of slavery or peonage will appear. On the other hand, if being pleasured is most compelling, tyranny and oppression will invade experience with some urgency. And finally, should the lovers will equality between these two concerns, in their effort to heal the split, they will personally suffer the problematic character of democratic forms. To some extent our political past influences our sexual negotiations, but in equal measure sexual pleasure itself is a source of political practice and theory.

The list of oppositions and minglings could easily be extended, but such an extension would not change the fact that human sex inevitably partakes of human experience, for better or for worse, and through its claim on the body simultaneously asserts its particular difference, for better or for worse.

Its particular difference from everything else in this life lies in the possibility which sex offers man for regaining *his own* body through knowing the body of his loved one. And should he fail that *knowing* and *being known*, should he lapse into all those ways of *knowing about* which he has proudly learned to confuse with knowing—both bodies will again escape him. Increasingly, as D. H. Lawrence understood, man has become separated from his body, which he yearns to inhabit, such yearning understandably bringing sentimental and scientific prescriptions for the reunion eluding him. Yet it is through the brief reconciliation with his own and his loved one's body that he can now grasp—and endure—the bodily estrangement which has always been his lot, without succumbing to the blandishments that would betray the realities of both sides of this duality.

IN ORDER to develop more concretely my conviction that sex for the most part has lost its viability as a human experience, I wish to consider the Sex Research Project, directed by Dr. William H. Masters at the Washington University School of

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Medicine. Through the use of women volunteers Dr. Masters is endeavoring "to separate a few basic anatomic and physiologic truths" about "the human female's response" to what he calls "effective sexual stimulation." The subject, he believes, has been hopelessly beclouded by "literary fiction and fantasy," "pseudoscientific essays and pronouncements," and "an unbelievable hodgepodge of conjecture and falsehood." His debt to Kinsey is clear, though qualified. He acknowledges his "complete awe" for Kinsey's "time-consuming efforts" which have made his own research not only "plausible, but possible." On the other hand he finds that the work of his predecessors, including Kinsey, has unfortunately been "the result of individual introspection, expressed personal opinion, or of limited clinical observation"—rather than "a basic science approach to the sexual response cycle."* Therefore, he has done what was indeed inevitable: he has moved the whole investigation into the laboratory.

I should make clear that Dr. Masters's project itself interests me far more than his exact findings. This project strikes me as one of those occasional yet remarkable enterprises which, despite its creator's intentions, quite transcends its original and modest scientific boundaries, so that it becomes a vivid allegory of our present dilemma, containing its own image of man—at the same time that it charts a New Jerusalem for our future. Such an enterprise, when constitutive, is apt to be more relevant and revealing than deliberate art. Because no actual artist is involved, it is not particularly rewarding to ask how this matter acquires its revelatory, even poetic, power. Often its director merely pursues the prevailing inclination in his field. Yet the pursuit is so single-minded, so fanatical and literal, that part of the power of the enterprise as constitutive symbol must be credited to the director's unflagging lack of imagination and his passionate naïveté, which stay undeterred by all the proprieties, traditions, and accumulated wisdom that would only complicate his course.

I SHALL not linger over the anatomical and physiological detail in Dr. Masters's reports, except to say it concerns the changes observed on the various parts of the bodies of his volunteers as they approach, accomplish, and depart from sexual climax. Of all the mechanical, electrical, and electronic devices at his command in this research, it is movie-making which seems to give Dr. Masters the clearest edge over the subjective distortions of his predecessors:

> Since the integrity of human observation of specific detail varies significantly, regardless of the observer's training or good intent, colored motion-picture photography has been used to record in absolute detail all phases of the human sexual response cycle.

This movie is often referred to in Dr. Masters's writings and, I am told, has been exhibited at a number of scientific institutes throughout the country. So fond is he of this medium that there seem to be occasions when his scientific prose seeks, however incompletely, to emulate not only the objectivity but the aesthetic brilliance of his movie sequences:

> If the bright pink of the excitement phase changes to a brilliant primiparous scarlet-red, or the multiparous burgundy color, a satisfactory plateau phase has been achieved.

There is even a point at which the movie medium itself becomes the inventor: like the accidental solution or the contaminated culture, which have heroic roles in older scientific romances, movie-making allows Dr. Masters to uncover "the vascular flush reaction to effective sexual stimulation" which had not been previously described in the scientific literature.

> With the aid of artificially-increased skin surface temperature, such as that necessary for successful motion-picture photography, the wide distribution of this flush becomes quite apparent. . . . . With orgasm imminent, this measle-like rash has been observed to spread over the anterior-lateral borders of the thighs, the buttocks and the whole body.

Probably it was this discovery of the "measle-like rash" which inspired a more Pavlovian venture which, if read slowly, will be seen to have quite eerie dimensions:

> One observed subject, undergoing electroencephalographic evaluation, had been trained for 4 months to attain orgasm without producing concomitant muscle tension in order to provide significance for her tracing pattern. Yet, this patient repeatedly showed a marked flush phenomenon over the entire body during plateau and orgasm, and during resolution was completely covered with a filmy, fine perspiration.

If movie-making is Dr. Masters's main laboratory device, "automanipulative technics" constitute his "fundamental investigative approach" to "the sexual response cycle of the human female." His frankness here is to be commended—particularly since some scientists might feel that such automanipulation was inadequate to the verisimilitude necessary for laboratory demonstration. Dr. Masters himself does not discuss the issue, but his obvious preference for this approach over "heterosexual activity" does not appear to be ascribable to decorum. To some degree, I imagine, it was the laboratory procedures and devices—particu-

*These and all subsequent quotations are from Dr. Masters's article, "The Sexual Response Cycle of the Human Female" (*Western Journal of Surgery, Obstetrics, and Gynecology*, Jan.-Feb. 1960).

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larly motion picture photography—which determined the approach, automanipulation being clearly more accessible to scientific inspection than coition. But more important, there is evidence that Dr. Masters regards automanipulation to be a more reliable—that is, more predictable—technique than "heterosexual activity" in the pursuit of "the more intense, well-developed, orgasmic response" cycle.

> This type of total pelvic reaction is particularly true for an orgasmic phase elicited by manual manipulation, but it also occurs, although less frequently, with coition.

Little is told us about the volunteers in this research. Apparently the project began with prostitutes. But when objections were made that such a profession might not yield the best "normal" sample, subjects were chosen among medical students and medical students' wives who volunteered and were paid a modest fee for their activities. Naturally no studies could be made on those who, for whatever reason, would not volunteer. And presumably quickly eliminated were those young women who offered themselves out of their enthusiastic wish to contribute to science, only to discover they could not sustain their sexual excitement in the setting of the laboratory, the paraphernalia, the cameras, the technicians, the bright lights. And even more quickly eliminated were those women who on initial interview were not sure whether or not they had climax: "Our rule of thumb is if they're not sure about it they probably haven't had it."

Other circumstances surrounding the study can only be guessed at. Like much scientific research, this particular project must have been an orderly affair. It can be assumed that the investigators did not wait on the whim of their volunteers; that is, they were not subject to call day or night whenever the volunteer felt in the mood. No, the women were given regular appointments during the working day when the entire research crew was available. Doubtless, too, the directors of the project considered it scientifically unseemly to encourage sexual titillation in their volunteers—certainly out of the question would have been anything resembling a physical overture. Should suggestive reading matter be required by the research—as it indeed occasionally was—it would have to be offered the volunteers in a spirit of detachment; not even the hint of a smirk could be allowed to disrupt the sobriety of the occasion. On the whole, the erotic basis would have to be provided by the scientific situation itself, in addition to the actual manipulation: that is, the prospect of arriving at the laboratory at 10:00 A.M., disrobing, stretching out on the table, and going to work in a somewhat businesslike manner while being measured and photographed, would have to provide its own peculiar excitement. (Thank you, Miss Brown, see you same time next week. Stop at the cashier's for your fee.) So, back to one's ordinary existence.

IF THESE speculations have any truth, what can be said about the qualities that the ideal subject for such experiments would have? In a general way, her sexuality would have to be autonomous, separate from and unaffected by her ordinary world. "World" here would have to include not only affection but all those exigencies of human existence which tend to shape our erotic possibilities. Objectively, her sexuality would be mechanically accessible or "on call"—under circumstances which would be, if not intimidating, at least distracting to most bodies. Hers would have to be indifferent to the entire range of experiences, pleasant and unpleasant, whose claim is not only not salacious but makes us forget there is such a thing as sexuality. Her lust would lie to hand, ready to be invoked and consummated, in sickness or in health, in coitus or "automanipulation," in homosexuality or heterosexuality, in exasperation or calm, hesitancy or certainty, playfulness or despair. (This would be the other side of that older, though not unrelated romanticism which just as willfully insisted on soft lights, Brahms, incense, and poetical talk.) In other words, her sexuality would be wholly subject to her will: whenever she determined—or the project determined—that she should have reached a climax, she would willingly begin those gestures that would lead to one. To use the modern idiom, all that would be unavailable to her sexological dexterity would be frigidity. Or, to speak more clearly, all that would be unavailable to her would be a real response to the laboratory situation. Insofar as her sexuality was under her will's dominion, she would resemble those odd creatures on the old television quiz programs—also ideal subjects in their own way—who were led from boarding houses to stand in a hot soundproof isolation booth, and when the fateful question was delivered from the vault, answered correctly and without a tremor how many words there were in *Moby Dick*—answered correctly in a loud clear voice under circumstances in which most of us could not even mumble our name. The popularity of these programs (at least until skullduggery was revealed) suggests the audience looked with envy and/or admiration at this caricature of knowledge—a knowledge equally responsive to its owner's will, regardless of contingency or trapping.

A truly constitutive symbol should embody both an accurate rendering of contemporary life and a clear indication of what that life should be. Taking, for the moment, only the ideal contained in my description of the volunteer in these experiments, I would say that she is a latterday Queen of Courtly Love, a veritable Queen Guinevere. For most modern men and women, who grow ever more discouraged by their bodies' stubborn refusal to obey their owners' will, this Lady of the Laboratory has long been the woman of their

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dreams: men long to channel or claim this creature's prompt and unspecific response for their own specific overtures, while women dream of rivaling her capacity to serve her body's need whenever she so wills.

And what of those self-effacing scientists behind the camera who conceived and guided this research? Do they too reflect who we are and who we would become? We know as little about this research team as we know about the volunteers. How the scientific boundaries were staked out and protected against trespass is not described in the reports. Once again we can only surmise, but that there was difficulty is suggested by a remark Dr. Masters made in one of his lectures—namely, that he preferred to have a woman scientist alongside him in these investigations because she helped to make him or keep him more "objective." I assume he meant that having an actual woman present, fully clad in the white coat of science, reminded him not only of the point of the matter at hand but of the more hazardous life to be lived with women outside the laboratory—of the difference between the ideal and the actual. It would be a ticklish problem how to maintain the proper detachment to protect the scientists without at the same time inhibiting the volunteers. Here the equipment and rituals of research would help. And very possibly there would be a deliberate effort to eliminate even the ordinary frivolity that sometimes overcomes a surgical team in the midst of the most delicate operation, because frivolity in this sort of research might be only a way-station en route to the lubricious. Any falling-away into the most ordinary locker-room talk, in or out of the laboratory, would have to be regarded as a danger signal. I imagine each scientist, with all the resolution at his command, would remind himself continually it was just an ordinary day's work in the laboratory, no different from the work next door with the diabetic rats. At the end of the day, when his wife asked, "How were things at the lab today?" he would reply, "Oh nothing, just the same old grind." And if she pressed him in a jealous fashion, his justifications might resemble those of a young artist explaining his necessity to sketch nude models. Of course, there would be strict rules forbidding dalliance between scientist and volunteer after hours. But should they happen to run into one another in the cafeteria, each would keep his conversation casual, trying not to allude to those more cataclysmic events of a few hours before. Mindful of his professional integrity, the scientist would have to guard against prideful thoughts that he knew her, if not better, at least more microscopically than those nearest her. Most troublesome of his self-appointed tasks, it seems to me, would be his effort to prevent his research from invading his own ordinary erotic life, particularly if it were worried by the usual frustrations. In this regard he would be indeed heroic to withstand the temptation of comparing his mate's response to those unspecific, yet perfectly formed, consummations of the laboratory.

AGAIN, IF THESE imaginings have any truth, how may we characterize the ideal scientist in research of this immediate order? First of all, he would have to *believe,* far more than the volunteers, in a "basic science" approach to sex. This is not to say that he would consider the practice of sex a possible science, even though his practice might eventually be informed by his scientific theories. But it would have to be an article of faith for him that the visible palpable reactions of the organs themselves, regardless of whatever human or inhuman context they might occur in, would speak a clear unambiguous truth to all who cared to heed. In his hierarchy of beliefs, these reactions would take precedence in every sense. The questions we are apt to ask about human affairs, not excluding lust, ordinarily have to do with appropriateness, affection, etc.—in other words, right or wrong, good or bad, judged in human terms. On the other hand, the ideal Sexologist, as he presses his eye to his research, finds another variety of drama—inordinately complicated in its comings and goings, crises and resolutions—with its own requirements of right and wrong, good and bad, all writ very small in terms of "droplets" and "engorgements" and "contractions."

The will of the ideal Sexologist seems different from the will of the Lady of the Laboratory, but it may be the opposition is more illusory than actual. The latter wills orgasm through physical manipulation. Certainly the sexologist supports and approves her willing, such sexual promptness being ideal for laboratory study. However, while his approval may be invented by his will, it is by no means the most important expression of his will. As a scientist his will must be given to the systematic inspection of the sexual response of the "human female," literally portrayed. To this end he persists in his gadgetry, always at the expense of any imaginative grasp of the occasion. His will to be a scientist requires his further commitment to any number of willful enterprises; in the present circumstance he finds it necessary to will his own body to be unresponsive—not merely to the events on the laboratory table but to any fictional construction of these events his imagination might contrive, because imagination, at least in this arena, is his opponent in his pursuit of science. On the surface his dilemma may seem a familiar one, being comparable to older ascetic ventures, particularly of the Eastern yoga variety. But the sexologist's task is actually more difficult: asceticism is not his goal—the very nature of his enterprise points in an opposite direction. He wishes indifference which he can invoke at will: it may be the project which demands his not responding, but—as we shall see later—it may be other moments, unofficial and unscientific, which seem to call forth his willed lack of response. The

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will not to respond and the will to respond are related possibilities of the will. In this sense, the Lady of the Laboratory and the ideal Sexologist are collaborators rather than opponents. Of course, I speak in ideal terms—whether these ideals can be achieved is another matter. But if the Lady of the Laboratory is a latter day Queen of Courtly Love, then our ideal Sexologist is the modern Sir Galahad, and together—separately or commingled—they rule our dreams of what should be.

Let us remind ourselves that most of us could not hope to qualify for this research—either as volunteers or as scientists. But this does not mean the differences are great between us and them. True, compared to ours, their lives have an oversized quality, and true, they are in the vanguard. But in a real sense our fleshly home is that laboratory. Whatever room we choose for our lovemaking we shall make into our own poor laboratory, and nothing that is observed or undergone in the real laboratory of science is likely to escape us. At this stage, is there any bit of sexology that is not in the public domain, or at least potentially so for those who can read? Whatever detail the scientific will appropriates about sex rapidly becomes an injunction to be imposed on our bodies. But it is not long before these impositions lose their arbitrary and alien character and begin to change our actual experience of our bodies. Unfortunately our vision of the ideal experience tends to be crudely derived from the failure of our bodies to meet these imperatives.

Our residence in the laboratory is recent: really only since the turn of the century has the act of sex been interviewed, witnessed, probed, measured, timed, taped, photographed, judged. Before the age of sexology, objectifications of the sexual act were to be found in pornography and the brothel, both illicit, both pleasurable in purpose, both suggesting the relatively limited manner in which will—given absolute dominion—could be joined to sexual pleasure. However else the Marquis de Sade may be read, he at least offered the most exhaustive inventory yet seen of techniques for exploiting the pleasure of the body's several parts, if one wholeheartedly put one's will to it. As a moralist he seemed to say, Why our particular rules? What if there were no limits? More recently, yet still before sexology, it was possible for shy erotomaniacs, disguised as greengrocers, to visit brothels, there to peek at the antics of the inmates. The bolder ones could join the sport. When the performance reached its final gasp our tradesmen, now satiated, would slink back to the propriety and privacy of their own quarters, convinced their ordinary domestic world was discreetly separate from the world of the peephole which they paid to enter. In fact, or so it seemed, the separateness of these two worlds heightened the erotic possibilities of each. The emancipation which sexology enforced gradually blurred this distinction, making it unclear whether each home had become its own brothel or whether every brothel had become more like home. The truth is that sexology eventually not only blurred the distinction, but by housing us all in laboratories, made both the brothel and pornography less exciting dwellings for our erotic investigations.

WHEN LAST we left our pathetic lovers I suggested that as their self-pity and bitterness mounted, they might—in desperation—turn to adultery. Yet even for the person who believes himself to be without scruples, adultery—in fact or fantasy—is difficult to arrange, exhausting to maintain. Requiring, as it does, at least two persons and two wills, this illicit encounter risks the danger of further pathos. But if we heed our laboratory drama carefully, we can see there is another possibility preferable to adultery. According to the lesson of the laboratory there is only one perfect orgasm, if by "perfect" we mean one wholly subject to its owner's will, wholly indifferent to human contingency or context. Clearly, the perfect orgasm is the orgasm achieved on one's own. No other consummation offers such certainty and moreover avoids the messiness that attends most human affairs. The onanist may choose the partner of his dreams who very probably will be the Lady of the Laboratory, or he may have his orgasm without any imagined partner. In either case, he is both scientist and experimental subject, science and sex now being nicely joined. In his laboratory room he may now abstract his sexual parts from his whole person, inspect their anatomic particularities, and observe and enjoy the small physiologic events he knows best how to control. True, this solitary experience may leave him empty and ashamed. But as a citizen of his times he will try to counter this discomfort by reminding himself that sexology and psychoanalysis have assured him masturbation is a morally indifferent matter. As a true modern he tells himself that it is not as good as what two people have, but that does not make it bad. Superstitious people of other ages thought it drove one crazy, but he knows better; he knows that the real threat to *his* sanity is unrelieved sexual tension. In fact—he may decide—were it not for certain neurotic Victorian traces he has not managed to expunge from his psyche, he could treat the matter as any other bodily event and get on with his business. So we must not be too harsh with our pathetic lovers if they take refuge in solitary pleasures—even if they come to prefer them to the frustrations of sexual life together. Nor should we be too surprised if such solitary pleasure becomes the ideal by which all mutual sex is measured—and found wanting.

Let us now turn to the phenomenon being inspected and celebrated in our laboratory—the phenomenon which contributes most of all to our lovers' impasse. Of all the discoveries sexology has made, the female orgasm remains the most imposing in its consequences. De Tocqueville's pre-

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diction of life between the sexes in America* might not have been so sanguine, could he have anticipated first, the discovery of sexology and psychoanalysis, and second, their discovery of the female orgasm.

In the second half of the 19th century Western man began to see nature in a new and utilitarian way as a variety of energies, hitherto unharnessed, which could now be tamed and transformed into industrial servants which in turn would fashion never-ending progress and prosperity. The health of the machine, powered by steam and electricity, and the sickness of the machine if those energies were misdirected or obstructed, were obsessive considerations of the period. It was entirely appropriate to regard the human body as still another natural object with many of the vicissitudes of the machine: this had always been medicine's privilege. But for the first time the scientists, in their intoxication, could forget the duality previous centuries knew: namely, that the body is both a natural object and not a natural object. And once it was decided the dominant energy of the human machine was sex, the new science of sexology was born. With the suppression of the second half of the dialectic, sexology and psychoanalysis could—with the assistance of the Romantics—claim the erotic life as their exclusive province, removing it from all the traditional disciplines, such as religion, philosophy, literature, which had always concerned themselves with sex as human experience. Qualities such as modesty, privacy, reticence, abstinence, chastity, fidelity, shame—could now be questioned as rather arbitrary matters which interfered with the health of the sexual parts. And in their place came an increasing assortment of objective terms like *ejaculatio praecox,* foreplay, forepleasure, frigidity—all intended to describe, not human experience, but the behavior of the sexual parts. The quite preposterous situation arose in which the patient sought treatment for *ejaculatio praecox* or impotence and the healer sought to find out whether he liked his partner.

IF THE Victorians found sex unspeakable for the wrong reasons, the Victorian sexologists found it wrongly speakable. (To what extent Victorian prudery was actually modesty or reticence, I cannot say. It has become habitual for us to regard Victorian lovemaking as an obscenity.) Science is usually democratic, and since sex now belonged to science, whatever facts or assumptions were assembled had immediately to be transmitted to the people, there to invade their daily life. Writing of the Kinsey Report, Lionel Trilling finds—correctly, I believe—a democratic motive for the study:

> In speaking of its motives, I have in mind chiefly its impulse toward acceptance and liberation, its broad and generous desire for others that they be not harshly judged. . . . The Report has the intention of habituating its readers to sexuality in all its manifestations; it wants to establish, as it were, a democratic pluralism of sexuality. . . . This generosity of mind . . . goes with a nearly conscious aversion from making intellectual distinctions, almost as if out of the belief that an intellectual distinction must inevitably lead to a social discrimination or exclusion.

If we disregard Kinsey's scientific pretensions, we still must recognize his eminence as arbiter of sexual etiquette. Like the lexicographer who finds his sanction in usage, Kinsey discovers his authority in practice: his democratic message is that we all do—or should do—more or less the same things in bed. And any notion lovers retain from an older tradition that what they have together is private and unique is effectively disproved by his cataloguing of sexual manners, providing they join him in equating behavior with experience. As a fitting disciple of Kinsey, Masters actualizes the "pluralism of sexuality" within the democratic unit of the laboratory and enlarges behavior to include the more minute physiological developments which, too, should belong to every citizen.

The political clamor for equal rights for woman at the turn of the century could not fail to join with sexology to endow her with an orgasm, equal in every sense to the male orgasm. It was agreed that she was entitled to it just as she was entitled to the vote. Moreover, if she were deprived of such release her perturbation would be as unsettling to her nervous system as similar frustration was thought to be for the man. Equal rights were to be erotically consummated in simultaneous orgasm. On the one hand it was unhealthful for her to be deprived of release and, on the other hand, psychoanalysis decreed that an important sign of her maturity as woman was her ability to achieve it. In other words, without orgasm she was neurotic to begin with or neurotic to end with.

Though simultaneous orgasm seemed to be a necessary consequence of equal rights, the problem remained that in matters of lust more than a decree or amendment was required for such an achievement. True, the sexologists were most generous with instruction, but each citizen has had to discover over and over again the degree to which he is caught in the futile struggle to will what could not be willed—at the same time that he senses the real absurdity of the whole willful enterprise. The lover learns, as his indoctrination progresses, to observe uneasily and even resist his rush of pleasure if it seems he is to be premature. When

*". . . I never observed that the women of America consider conjugal authority as an unfortunate usurpation of their rights, or that they thought themselves degraded by submitting to it. It appeared to me, on the contrary, that they attach a sort of pride to the voluntary surrender of their will . . . . Though their lot is different, they consider both of them as beings of equal value . . . . If I were asked . . . to what the singular prosperity and growing strength of that people ought mainly to be attributed, I should reply: To the superiority of their women." Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America.*

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no amount of resolution can force his pleasure to recede, he learns to suffer his release and then quickly prod himself to an activity his body's exhaustion opposes. In other words, he learns to take his moment in stride, so to speak, omitting the deference these moments usually call forth and then without breaking stride get to his self-appointed and often fatiguing task of tinkering with his mate—always hopeful that his ministrations will have the appearance of affection. While she is not likely to be deceived by such dutiful exercises, she nevertheless wishes for both their sakes that her body at least will be deluded into fulfilling its franchise.

As FAR AS I know, little attention was paid to the female orgasm before the era of sexology. Where did the sexologists find it? Did they discover it or invent it? Or both? I realize it may seem absurd to raise such questions about events as unmistakable as those witnessed in our laboratory. But I cannot believe that previous centuries were not up to our modern delights; nor can I believe it was the censorship imposed by religion which suppressed the supreme importance of the female orgasm. My guess, which is not subject to laboratory proof, is that the female orgasm was always an occasional, though not essential, part of woman's whole sexual experience. I also suspect that it appeared with regularity or predictability only during masturbation when the more human qualities of her life with her mate were absent. Further, her perturbation was unremarkable and certainly bearable when orgasm did not arrive, for our lovers had not yet been enlightened as to the disturbances resulting from the obstruction or distortion of sexual energies. At this stage her orgasm had not yet been abstracted and isolated from the totality of her pleasures, and enshrined as the meaning and measure of her erotic life. She was content with the mystery and variety of her difference from man, and in fact would not have had it otherwise. Much that I have said, if we leave aside the erotomanias which have always been with us, applies to the male of previous centuries. For him, too, the moment of orgasm was not abstracted in its objective form from the whole of his erotic life and then idealized. And he too preferred the mystery of difference, the impact of human contingency, becoming obsessed with the sheer anatomy and mechanics of orgasm only when all else was missing, as in masturbation.

Theological parallelism is a treacherous hobby, especially when we deal with movements flagrantly secular. Nevertheless, the manner in which lovers now pursue their careers as copulating mammals—adopting whatever new refinements sexology devises, covering their faces yet exposing their genitals—may remind us of older heresies which, through chastity or libertinism, have pressed toward similar goals; one heretical cult went so far as to worship the serpent in the Garden of Eden. But the difference between these older heresies and modern science—and there is a large one—must be attributed to the nature of science itself, which—if we accept such evidence as the Lambeth Conference—by means of its claims to objectivity can invade religion and ultimately all of life to a degree denied the older heresies. So, with the abstraction, objectification, and idealization of the female orgasm we have come to the last and perhaps most important clause of the contract which binds our lovers to their laboratory home, there to will the perfection on earth which cannot be willed, there to suffer the pathos which follows all such strivings toward heaven on earth.

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GLORIA GOLDREICH

STREET OF THE PROPHETS

IT IS COLD in Jerusalem in the winter. Winter comes late in October and shoulders its way in stubbornly throughout the hilled city. The bell of the kerosene-seller clangs against the weary wave of winds and the wagons are pulled by skinny horses who shiver beneath their torn blankets, indifferent to the warmth-giving liquid they carry. The streets are filled with hurrying citizens, shivering under their mounds of jerseys, sweaters, and jackets, running a desperate race against the cold which pursues them up and down King George Avenue, in the doorways of Jaffa Road where they pause for a few minutes to assure a friend that life will begin again when the cold breaks, in the shops of Ben Yehudah where the storekeeper wears gloves and keeps a sharp eye on the door, admonishing entering customers to close it quickly before the cold scores a point. The children whip through the streets, early beginners in the war against Jerusalem winters. Only the beggars are stationary, having disregarded the race long ago. They bring their stoves to the windy corners and warm their outstretched hands over fires that glow orange and pink in the mid-afternoon, Sabbath-eve gloom.

The beggar who stands at the doorway of the Café Noma, on the Street of the Prophets, is a veteran spectator of the annual race. His toothless mouth yawns open and the thick-faced lips turn upward, prepared to swallow the whining wind. The patch which covers the gap a tired Eastern surgeon left long ago when he tore the diseased eye from its root, flutters in the winter wind. Tears stream steadily and indifferently from the other eye, screening the bloodshot pale blue orb, and coursing down the leathery scarred cheeks. The gray-brown hair is lifted from his shoulders by the wind and tossed back onto the glen-plaid quilt which is his working outfit during the winter months. Laceless sneakers, a pair of patched dungarees, and graying woolen socks with the marks of an Oxfordshire laundry, complete the doorman's outfit and the tinkle of the thin coins in his cup is the official welcome to the warmth of the café.

GLORIA GOLDREICH is a young American writer who lived in Israel for two years. This story marks her first appearance in COMMENTARY.

Matti Gross runs toward him, down the Street of the Prophets, her music books clutched under one arm and a *grush** clenched between the thick fingers of her gloves. Matti's race is just beginning and she has no trepidation about her ability to outwit the devastating cold which creeps through the thick tweed winter coat her grandmother sent from New York and bites at her ears through the golden wool of her kerchief. The café will be warm and Matti swings through the door, dropping the *grush* in the beggar's cup, ignoring the brief focus of his good eye, and dismissing the slight heave of her stomach which automatically accompanies the gesture. She is an early initiate into the rules of the adult world.

The café is buzzing and crowded, full of her parents' friends, huddled together in the emptiness of the pre-Sabbath hours, loudly gay in defiance of the winter weariness of the street. A thick screen of cigarette smoke shadows the fluorescent brightness of the electric fixtures and dims the gleam on the whistling copper espresso machine and the bright red and yellow formica-topped tables where five or six patrons cluster around a space designed for two. On long poles along the curtained windows that peer out on *Rechov Haneviim*,† copies of *Life, Look, Paris Match, Sports Illustrated,* and *Elle* are languidly draped, reminders of the world of Matti's American aunts and uncles, where kerosene heat is unknown and fur-draped women on the arms of gentlemen in evening clothes attend premières and cocktail parties. The pages of the journals are blotched with coffee stains and greasy finger marks, and new stains are added by the hour as the magazines are hopefully lifted, slowly leafed through, and listlessly returned.

"Get that kerchief off. Do you want to catch pneumonia?" Chava, the head waitress does not pause as she passes the child, the admonition is clipped and ready, timed to the tempo of the afternoon. She is black-haired and gold-toothed, her long lean form arched within the starched royal blue cotton uniform, constantly anticipating a scene, always giving orders. She reminds Matti of a kindergarten teacher who shouted and

* Israeli coin.

† The street of the prophets.

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shouted and left one day with tears running down her face and her sandals fluttering. But Chava wears sturdy oxfords and has no tears, only great stores of knowledge sealed behind the bright blackness of her eyes.

IT IS Chava who knows who has left and who is expected. Answering the insistent double rings of the telephone beside the expresso machine she calls out, "No, Shlomo will not be here today. He's in Tel Aviv. I don't know where," and slams the receiver down, bellowing another order of fish and chips to the harassed Yemenite cook, then lifting the phone yet again to call out: "Moshe! Make it quick, please! We must keep the line clear for a Haifa call." It is Chava who knows what group has departed and to whose flat they have gone, who is in love and who are living together, and she keeps the information locked within her as she does the knowledge of who owes and their capacity for paying. She is the teacher of the café kindergarten, the wicked stepmother of the strange unrelated family, and hatred and need of her combine to draw them even closer together in their search for warmth against the Jerusalem winter.

"Go sit over there with Gideon, Matti. Your mother will be here any minute." Chava points with an empty espresso cup (teachers need rulers) to where Gideon is sitting, the eternal stick of charcoal between his fingers, the perpetual cigarette burning its long ash in the overflowing ashtray.

"You know, Gideon, you don't really smoke. You only light cigarettes," Matti once told him and Gideon gazed back at her, his gray eyes serious, carefully considering what she had said before acknowledging its truth.

"You're right, Matti," he answered finally, and they grinned at each other, pleased with their shared knowledge.

"Hello, Gideon. Are we going to the movies?"

"Take your coat off. Do you want a hot chocolate? My God, you're really going to have buck teeth."

Matti laughs, glad to take her coat off and allow the steamy heat of the café to banish the memory of the windswept streets and the icy chill of the front room where *Gveret* Horowitz made her race her fingers across the yellowing cold ivories of the grand piano while the metronome ticked away the precious Friday hours and the marble floor sent shafts of unremitting cold up her thin, stockinged legs. *Gveret* Horowitz wore gloves which she removed slowly to demonstrate the intricate scales and redonned swiftly as she surrendered the keyboard to Matti and hurried back to her electric fire. Gideon does not even wear gloves in the street and his bright green and white scarf sails after him in the wind when he and Matti rush through the streets on his scooter.

"Yes, I know. We have to go to the dentist. I'd rather have ices, thank you. Are we going to the movies or are you tired?"

There is no one in Jerusalem who does not know about Gideon's endless weariness. He is tired, always tired. Ten years ago he brought his tiredness to a London doctor who listened to his heart thoughtfully and told him that he would live only another four years. Gideon packed his art supplies and came to Jerusalem because if one had only four years to live it was best to grab them in the sun. No one had told him about Jerusalem's winters and once settled in the holy city he was too tired to move. He carries his fatigue into the café with him each Friday afternoon and seats it gently beside him, fearful of its fragility. His strange deformed heart continues beating and while he waits for it to stop he seizes pen, brush, and charcoal, capturing tractors for newspaper ads, the coil of Matti's shining braid, dejected magazine readers in smoky cafés, and the great barren landscape of Jerusalem's hills. The wait for death is tedious and he reads his way through it, filling his arms with books at Steinmatsky's bookstore, the American Embassy library, and the British Consulate, and piling them on the café table. There are sometimes books for Matti among them and she has spent winter afternoons sucking an ice cream cone and reading fairy tales at the café table while laughter, tears, and anger fluttered about her. Gideon does not find this strange. Those who wait for death are seldom surprised at the strangeness of those who are sure of life.

He orders ices for her now and waves across the room to Barbara Greenbaum who joins them, glowing with the sudden heat of the café, blond hair shining with the gleam of the Friday morning Prell shampoo.

"I only use it on Fridays," she has explained. "*L'havdil bayn kodesh va'chol.* You know, to separate the profane from the holy."

It is Barbara's final tribute to her bearded father who earns his living in Brooklyn mourning the dead for those too busy to mourn themselves and who does not understand the life his golden-haired daughter has chosen for herself, in the holy city toward which he prays.

"Hi, Matti. That's a cute dress. I just saw your mother at the dressmaker. She should be along soon. Going to buy me some coffee, Gideon?"

Gideon orders the coffee and pauses for a moment as the waitress hesitates, but shakes his head. He is too tired to think of someting new to drink and the taste of espresso and tobacco lines his tongue, thickening his thoughts and words.

"Matti wants to go to the movies. On the eve of the Sabbath in the holy city, this child wants to go to the movies. What do you say to that, Barbara?"

"Oh, I don't know." Barbara passes long, ink-stained fingers through the bright, clipped hair.

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"Can you think of anything else to do in Jerusalem on a Friday afternoon?"

"Yes," Gideon says shortly. "Go to Ashkelon."

"There are two movie houses in Ashkelon," Matti notes, "and everyone talks English funny."

"They're South African. That's why. Mostly. And we've probably seen both the films. But thanks for the offer, Gideon."

"No offer. I'm too tired anyway." The forgotten weariness seizes him and he slides down in his chair, pillowing his graying head against the mound of the green and white scarf.

"HELLO. You sleeping in the middle of the afternoon again?" Betty, Matti's mother, drops a kiss on Gideon's brow and sinks down beside him, straightening the collar on her daughter's dress, and flicking her pearls into place on the pink wool dress.

"What a time I had coming here. Everything happened to me."

Barbara lights a cigarette and prepares to listen. She noticed long ago that no one simply comes to the Noma. They have adventures on the way there and they announce them in voices designed to gain the sympathy, the glee, the concern of their audience.

"Can you top this?" they ask as they enter, fresh from a battle with the municipality over taxes, tear-streaked over a scene on a straw mattress in a cold bedroom, hilarious after an English film at the Orna Cinema. Betty's adventure invariably involves shopkeepers who promised to hold a blouse and sold it minutes before she arrived or swore to match a swatch of wool and out of carefully premeditated spite succeeded in securing a color that clashed. Today her war was with a dressmaker who had made a hem too long (or too short?) but had met her match in Betty.

"I told her to have it ready by Monday. But what difference does it make? There's no place to wear the damn thing in this lousy city anyway." She pulls out her compact and stares at herself, watching the progress of the fine lines around her narrow green eyes, smoothing back the cowl of auburn hair, daring the too full, carefully painted lips to smile after the clawing cold of the street.

"Was the kibbutz more exciting?" Gideon is sketching again, his eyes rooted on a bearded man across the room who is reading the tattered menu for the tenth time and counting a tiny mountain of coins. Enough for a fish and chip platter? Probably not. The beard twitches toward Chava and a billowing pastry appears before him.

Matti had been conceived in Ithaca, New York and born in a Galilee kibbutz. In Ithaca, "kibbutz," the very word, held a joyful romantic ring for the girl from Shaker Heights who had been bored by the careful, planned pattern of her existence as long as she could remember. David, the dark-haired boy with heavy brows, smelling always dimly of the earth and animals he was studying about at the School of Agriculture, was different. There was a purposeful tread to his life and a strength in his hands and eyes which intrigued the girl from Shaker Heights. He waited table at her sorority house, smiling at the laughter of the girls but removed from them and calm in his separateness. Betty helped him clear the tables and over polishing silverware he told her he was a Zionist, which she knew was different and better than just being simply Jewish. No, he had never been to Israel but he loved the land unseen and the dream unrealized. He lent the red-headed girl in the clinging pastel cashmere sweaters books on Zionism and Israel and explained them to her as leaders in his movement had explained them to him. She listened to his voice and lost his words. The romance sent her soaring; she had no need of the philosophy and later, curled comfortably in his arms, excited in the secret of it all, she planned a world of earth and sky and David, in the land whose place names tingled with a secret poetry. She was nineteen and drifted through classes and department stores, smiling at the foreign words she knew (*emek, galil, Tel Hashomer*), thrilling at the memory of her red hair streaming over the bright green lambs-wool bathrobe left hanging in David's bathroom.

David had been more prepared than she for the torrents of rage and surprise which poured forth from Brooklyn and Shaker Heights when the letters announcing their marriage (she was two months pregnant and they were both frightened and proud of their romantic entry into the adult world) sent their parents' worlds clashing. Her parents were annoyed, angry, and finally stoically accepting. But his tiny mother, weeping in anguished gasps, sobbing in Yiddish and imploring in broken English, would not be comforted.

They escaped from tears and anger to the kibbutz, starting the life they had dreamed of a bit early, prepared for starry nights and fulfilling work. But nothing prepared them for the starkness of the Northern hills, the groaning planed tables, and the meals and the conversation which vied with each other for boredom. Nor for the smallness of their room nor the vastness of the skies and the doubts of their co-workers and the unconvincing contribution of their work. Nor for the knot of homesickness which twisted in each of them separately and at both of them together. She thought of the shops, the aisles of department stores, the laughter of her sorority sisters, and he remembered the candy-stores on the streets of his childhood and the overcrowded living room and the libraries which had made it all seem so simple. They were hungry for the sound of English, lonely in the Hebrew language imperfectly learned, lonely even with each other, longing for the separate worlds they had escaped together.

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Their failure at the kibbutz was so carefully anticipated that when it engulfed them they did not care and hurried to Jerusalem with their baby, grateful for the concrete of the city streets, and the glow of shop windows. Somehow David found a job at the Ministry of Agriculture and somehow they were able to call the tiny apartment on the outskirts of Jerusalem, where the hills begin to roll toward the city and the skeleton of Hadassah Hospital fights the skies, home. In the café Betty rediscovered a semblance of the laughter of her sorority sisters, and David found a shadowed kinship to the booth in the back of the candy-store where the dream had begun. In the winter the café is warm and in the summer its American air conditioners soothe the hot heavy air. Their friends are there, ever transitory, always talking about home (England, South Africa, America, a deserted kibbutz), as clinging as a family but without familial disapproval or obligations. The names of the friends change as the years pass and Matti knows that today's "aunts" and "uncles," fondly teasing and loving her, may board a ship or plane tomorrow. The letters from America continue to demand reasons for staying in Israel and each year the answers grow more vague, the reasons less reasonable, the winters colder, and their arguments more aimless. Their marriage is suspended between their shared boredom and the child who is pet and promise, and cemented by an indecision which traps them both.

"CAN WE GO to the movies, Mommy?" Matti is watching Gideon sketch, noting suddenly that the bearded man is tearing into his pastry with his gloves still on and that Gideon has placed the charcoal fork in the wrong hand. The incongruity of it is too much for her and she turns from the sketch to her mother.

"Oh God, Matti, I've got a headache. And there's nothing decent playing."

"And besides you've seen all seven films." Gideon snaps the sketch pad closed and sinks down again wondering if Ashkelon is such a rotten idea after all. Barbara is collecting her parcels, preparing for her vigil at the teletype machine of the *Jerusalem Post,* counting her weekend weapons. Her Sabbath will be shrouded in English detective stories and blue air letter forms, and soothed by the pronouncements of *Time* magazine. That new South African doctor might come around. He has asked Chava for her address. Maybe. She is glad she is working this afternoon. Nothing to do. She tweaks Matti's braid, smiles at Betty, and winds her way into the grayness of the dying afternoon.

"I like Barbara." Matti makes lists, an early initiate into the Jerusalem pastime. The loved and the hated. The tolerated and the despised. Those who will stay and those who will leave.

The café tingles with the news of who is on what list.

"Andrea has gone to America."

"She'll never come back."

"Oh yes, she will."

"Want to bet?"

"What difference does it make?"

In the last shuddering days of winter nothing makes any difference except the promise of warmth on the way, or perhaps two bus tickets to Ashkelon.

"I like you too, Gideon. I hate *Gveret* Horowitz." The list becomes a sing-song chant. No one is listening to it, not even Matti. Unlike her parents and their friends, she recognizes the lists as the background music of boredom, the refrain of "nothing-to-do," to be composed and discarded according to the needs of the moment.

"What—they're still together?" Betty stares at a couple leaning earnestly toward each other over the tiniest of the yellow tables. She waves to them (their earnestness has nothing to do with *her*) and the boy glances up and motions to the girl who smiles across the room. Gideon notices the thinness of the smile and the crystal glow of tears behind the girl's black-rimmed glasses. She is an American, he remembers, doing graduate work at the University (in archaeology?—it must be archaeology). She wears bright plaid skirts and white tab-collared blouses underneath bright bulky mohair sweaters and carries quality paperback books to parties where she clutches them in one hand and her boyfriend's fingers in the other. The boy works on the *Post,* drifting amiably from department to department and with equal agreeableness from girl to girl. He grows a rich brown beard in the winter and shaves it swiftly in the spring when the waves of tourists from his native Boston swarm over the city. He is very large, drinks great quantities of beer, and is said to be writing a novel. (But when? Gideon wonders. After the café has closed in the evening and before it opens for breakfast?)

The girl has beautiful white skin, bruised by the Judean wind, and they have been holding hands for almost a year, but this afternoon they have not touched and, as if by instinct, no one has approached their table. Gideon realizes that they have been talking for hours and words are deserting them. The hints of crystal have become an uncontrolled rush of tears and the girl battles them with shredded kleenex, her elbows pillowed on the small perennial pile of paperbacks and the bright blue mohair shoulders shaking. She is struggling into her coat now and he sits helpless, his huge hands stretched before him, his eyes rooted to the coffee stains on the yellow table surface. She hurries out, forgetting to close the door. The breath of winter hurtles through the café and is abruptly banished by Chava's slam and muttered curse.

"She was crying," Matti says indifferently.

The tears of grownups are not a rare phenom-

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enon to her. She has watched her mother sob with boredom in their tiny flat and seen tears creep out of her father's eyes as he read a blue air letter from America. Once, when her parents had a party, she awakened to find a strange woman crying on her bed, the sobs interspersed with the sounds of the American musical comedy roaring off the phonograph. She hugged and patted the lady until the sobs drifted into silence and the child crept back into unchildlike sleep. She has even seen Gideon sitting in the café with his hands curled into fists which cup his eyes and his lips turned downward in misery. Not really crying but so heavily unhappy that she sat close to him and made drawings and sounds to coax his lips upward to laughter.

"So she was." Gideon lights another cigarette.

"Well, I guess that's the end of that. And they were cute together, sort of. Where *is* David?" Betty glances at her watch and then at the door.

"When Daddy comes, can we go to the movies?"

"Matti," Gideon says, laughing and serious, "We are living in the most exciting country in the world, still in the infancy of its statehood. (Or its adolescence?—I can't keep up with the propaganda.) Only five decades ago our magnificent Negev was burgeoning farm land and the Zionists came and turned it all into sand. Every year thousands of immigrants are encouraged to come here because misery loves company. This is the land of milk and honey because the streets of Jerusalem enjoy natural refrigeration. And in the midst of all this—in the capital of the last bastion of democracy in the Middle East on the eve of the holiest day of the week—what do you want to do? Go to the cinema!"

"Of course. You're silly, Gideon." And then Gideon is forgotten as she tumbles to the door and into the not-quite-ready arms of her father who is balancing parcels and letters and trying to close the door.

She drags him over to the table where Betty is buried in the *Jerusalem Post,* her impatience now hardened into annoyance rapidly freezing into anger. Gideon has watched the tableau of her moods many times before and it always succeeds in making him feel uncomfortably English and firmly relieved to be done with the decisions of living.

He looks across the room and notices that the bearded young man is also immersed in the newspaper—a huge finger tracing its way down the lists of films being shown in Jerusalem. It settles on one advertisement and the young man consults his watch and hurries out of the café. Having completed his own scene in uncomfortable calm, he is unwilling to forego an inch of the cellophane reel. Somewhere in Rehavia a girl in a mohair sweater is sobbing into a mattress, but her lover has lived in Jerusalem long enough to know that in the winter the cinema is the eternal panacea, the giant tranquilizer, bringing escape and forgetfulness in black and white or technicolor.

"BETTY." David is uncertain of his crime but prepared to be apologetic. In his heart he is constantly apologetic to his red-haired wife—apologetic to her for the burden of his Jewishness, of his Zionism, for the naïveté of the Cornell dream; apologetic for the boredom of the life they drift through, for the cold of the Jerusalem winters and for the heat of the summers; apologetic for the incessant annoyance he feels with her, and ultimately apologetic for his own uncertainty about their lives, the remnant of their love, and the lingering loneliness that dogs them in the flat, the café, or the cinema.

"You're very late." Betty barely looks up.

"I know. I picked up the mail at the Post Office. There's a letter from my mother. She's not feeling well."

"She hasn't felt well in six years. When did we get a letter that said she was feeling well? Your mother!"

"Damn it! She's an old woman and old people get sick. Can't you understand that, or didn't they get sick in Shaker Heights? I'm worried."

"You're worried. You worry about everything but me. And Matti. Worry about your mother, about the country, about the plumbing, but not about meeting me on time."

"Oh that's really important. After all, I knew you were shivering on a street corner. And Matti was at her piano lesson. Weren't you, honey?"

But Matti is not listening. She never listens to the cascade of trembling words but swims in her own world above the sea of accusations and recriminations her parents create around her.

"I love Grandma," she thinks rhythmically. "And Gideon. And Barbara. Barbara has pretty hair. I love Grandma."

Then, quite suddenly, there is a hush in the café. The radio is turned up and the monotone voice of Radio Israel's English newscaster fills the room. The weather will continue cold. (Chava buttons her cardigan and the girl sitting at the window tucks a tattered *Life* magazine between the cracks.) There was a large fire in Tel Aviv, but it is under control. ("Frozen out," smirks a UN soldier, but he is stared into silence.) A group of immigrants from Morocco is at the Knesset protesting unsatisfactory housing in the Northern Negev. ("Fine weather for a protest," Chava mutters.) A noted African statesman spent the morning at the Hebrew University. Kibbutz X is celebrating its tenth birthday. The country notes with sadness the passing of a beloved member of the Knesset. Volunteers are needed to give blood for a sick child in Haifa. There have been no border incidents for forty-

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eight hours. The sea is calm, but fishermen are reminded that a storm is anticipated on the Mediterranean. The time is . . . .

Chava clicks off the radio, the phone rings, and the buzz of conversation resumes, hurrying along to make up for the minutes missed while the life of the country penetrated the café afternoon.

Betty and David have lost the thread of their argument and are isolated on a familiar island of undefined anger. David rereads his mother's letter, reinforcing his anger with guilt, removing himself from his wife's world and plunging into the miseries of his mother's life. Was New York ever this cold in the winter, he wonders and remembers that it was, but the houses were warm with steam heat bubbling cheerfully from iron-gray radiators. He relaxes into memories of the over-heated, over-furnished living rooms of his childhood, patting his own child's hand, spread-eagled on the table. Matti is practicing octaves, hating *Gveret* Horowitz enough to achieve perfection and rise above her criticism.

Betty finishes the *Post* and regards a coffee-stained *Elle* with distaste. She is bad at languages, uncomfortable with French (at Cornell she had been coached by her dates—"I'm just not very bright," she would murmur, her green eyes just slightly but not disturbingly sad). After six years in Israel she is only contemptuously competent in Hebrew. She and David have few Israeli friends. On the few occasions when David invited Israeli co-workers, the evening lapsed into dismal silences—"The only bi-lingual silence in the world," Gideon said dryly afterward.

Matti's school friends are Israeli and when she is with them her chirping voice cannot be separated from their screaming chatter, but Friday afternoons are family days and they disappear into their homes to help set the tables and visit with aunts and uncles and grandparents. Matti dimly pretends that Gideon and her parents' other friends who tweak her braid as they pass the table and keep her ice-cream plate filled are similar to her schoolmates' shadowy relations. She does not realize that she is the café pet, their reminder of the world where there are children, large-eyed and laughing, to be loved.

She watches her mother toss the *Elle* aside in disgust, unable to read the memoirs of a Folies Bergère chorus girl. The defeat solves Betty's problem about the remaining hours of the winter afternoon.

"I've got a headache and I'm going home to sleep. Are you coming, David? Matti?"

She summons her court and struggles into the smartly belted, powder-blue winter coat, sent in a dutiful CARE package from Shaker Heights. David is indifferent but he remembers that he turned on the hot water heater before leaving that morning and feels the soapy hot water coursing down his back and the frothy steaminess of the tiny bathroom. It fits neatly into his reverie of Brooklyn living rooms and he too rises, glad of the decision, any decision.

Matti's lip trembles over the protruding tooth and she stuffs the slick dark braids into her mouth to control it. There will be nothing to do at home. The neighborhood children will be visiting or helping their parents and her own mother and father will nurse their empty anger through the icy bus ride and all the way up the hill to the flat.

"Coming Matti?" Betty is ready, packages and books in her arms and a soft white chiffon scarf wrapped around the red hair. A Shaker Heights young matron—slightly misplaced.

Gideon stands too and puffs a spot of charcoal under each of Matti's eyes with his dusty fingers.

"Invite me for dinner, Betty, and I'll bring Matti home later. I want some company at the cinema. Want to go to the movies, Matti?"

It is arranged and Betty and David hurry out, the race against the cold toward the warmth of the double bed, the forgetfulness of sleep and the steaming shower is officially on for them.

Gideon pays Chava and winds his huge scarf around his neck. Matti is ready, carefully holding his books and waiting for his hand. They wave to their friends and wander out, crossing the Street of the Prophets. They walk slowly, the tall young man whose scarf whips and waves behind him in the wind, and the book-laden child, still sucking her dark braid. The peal of a bell from the Scotch mission ripples through the gray winter air and a thread of ice dangles from a dust-red wall. They are on their way to the movies on the eve of the Sabbath in the holy city.

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DENNIS H. WRONG

POPULATION MYTHS

IN RECENT YEARS the rapid growth of world population has come to loom as one of the great problems of the age. Vivid and ominous metaphors like the "population explosion," the "population bomb," or the "swarming of the earth" are by now part of the familiar vocabulary of public awareness—so familiar, indeed, as to have created the impression that we have a firm understanding of the danger. Yet because population trends are inseparably related to such emotion-laden matters as the role of women and the position of the family in society, to sexual practices and moral doctrines, and to the comparative sizes of national, religious, and racial groups, there has been a general reluctance to press hard upon the conventional wisdom embodied in the prevailing metaphors. Thus the way has been left clear for a host of misconceptions to flourish about the causes and consequences and control of population growth. These misconceptions, moreover, are held both by the "optimists" who refuse to regard population growth as a profound threat to human welfare, and by the "alarmists" who have for so long considered themselves voices crying in a wilderness of indifference and prejudice that they have become prone to shrill exaggerations and the brandishing of scare statistics.

Perhaps the most common of all the misconceptions concerning the so-called population explosion is that it poses a problem only to the economically underdeveloped, non-Western part of the world. Although most Americans take it for granted that their numbers will continue to increase steadily, they are not apt to regard this increase as amounting to anything so threatening as an "explosion" and are inclined to use the latter term only with reference to the larger countries of Asia. Yet the United States, as well as several other Western countries, have maintained rates of population growth since World War II equalling or exceeding those of many underdeveloped areas. The American rate of increase during the past decade, for example, has been as high as that of India and higher than Japan's. Moreover, the comforting belief that rapid population growth is a danger only to the underdeveloped world holds only if one adopts a thoroughly catastrophic perspective. Continued population increase in the United States may not threaten us with imminent mass starvation and civil disorder, but it does strain our human and material resources, and aggravate our most serious social problems.

A second widespread misconception concerning the world population explosion is that it has resulted from a rise in the birth rate in the countries of rapid growth. This notion stems from a confusion between postwar American growth and the quite different pattern of growth in the underdeveloped countries. For in these latter countries the crucial factor has not been a "baby boom" such as we experienced here after the war, but rather a sharp drop in the death rate. In other words, while the level of fertility has remained the same or declined only slightly, a far higher proportion of infants is being kept alive by "death control" in the form of newly adopted medical and public-health measures. The survival of two newborn babies where previously only one survived is the immediate, demographically explosive consequence of the introduction of those measures, rather than an increase in the longevity of adults. Although the effects on population increase of this decline in infant mortality are identical to those of a rise in the birth rate, the "mindless breeding" of the "Asian masses" has nothing to do with the issue—tasteless and irrelevant references to sex as the "Indian national sport" notwithstanding.

But why have Asians, Africans, and Latin Americans failed to adopt birth control to balance the effects of death control? Is the problem, as is sometimes suggested, a matter of illiterate, superstitious, church-ridden peasants fatalistically clinging to past customs and incapable of following the Western example by adjusting their behavior to a new demographic situation? Here again a misconception—and a self-righteous one—is at work, for the demographic situation in the underdeveloped countries is unlike anything in Western population history. In Ceylon —to take the standard, and only slightly extreme, case—the death rate recently dropped as much in a single year (1947) as it did over a full fifty years in the West during the period when the latter was going through its own modernization process. It took nearly a century of

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declining mortality and rapid population growth before fertility began to decline in the West; little wonder, then, that reproductive behavior in much of the underdeveloped world (where mortality levels are by now only a little higher than in the West) has not yet adjusted itself to the effects of death control. Unlike the contemporary underdeveloped nations, moreover, the West in its time had migration outlets to absorb part of its growth. And finally, the European states were never as large in absolute terms nor as densely settled as the major underdeveloped countries are today.

Still another common misconception is that the balance of power in world politics is likely to be altered by the rapid growth in the population of the underdeveloped world. In the past, this idea often inspired apprehensions with a racist tinge (the "yellow peril" and the "black hordes"); nowadays, it more usually inspires "wave-of-the-future" rhetoric. The truth, however, is that in the nuclear age sheer numbers can no longer turn a nation into a major world power; indeed, the rapid growth of population in the underdeveloped countries actually *reduces* both their military and their industrial potential. To be sure, defenders of the view that national power in some last analysis still rests on population size insist—in an effort to adapt this thesis to the facts of nuclear technology—that only large and wealthy nations can support a considerable nuclear defense establishment. But this claim loses any plausibility it may seem to have when one considers the destructive power of even a few "old-fashioned" nuclear bombs, or when one recalls the one-sided, unbalanced patterns of economic growth which totalitarian regimes such as those of Russia and China are able to sustain in order to build up their armaments.

DOES THE population explosion, then, pose *no* problem to the world? Are the forebodings to which it has given rise utterly unjustified? Since the pace of world population growth has been quickened by the spread of death control rather than by an increase in human fertility, are we not entitled to regard an extra thirty years of life as an unqualified blessing conferred upon us by modern technology? If death control results in a larger population, why should this be of concern to anyone except a few aesthetes, haters of crowds, and those people who (as *Time* once suggested) prefer birds and animals to human beings? The answer is that the population explosion remains a monumentally serious problem even though some of the fears to which it gives rise are groundless, and even though it is the result of a technical revolution that is beneficial in other respects. In order to grasp its true nature and dimensions, one must begin by distinguishing clearly between its long-run and short-run effects.

Looking several centuries ahead, it is impossible to escape the conclusion that world population growth *must* eventually come to an end. One can argue, as do the "optimists," that new inventions, new sources of food, the marvels of science and technology in general, are capable of achieving gains in productivity that could support a vastly larger population than at present. But to grant that this is in principle possible is a very different matter from assuming that the benefits of such technological progress will in fact be made available in a short time to all of the world's peoples. The optimists are nowhere more optimistic than in their readiness to assume that increases in productivity that are now, or will shortly become, technically *possible* are likely to be *actually* achieved in this world of wars and national and imperial rivalries. Moreover, glowing estimates of future advances in productivity usually concentrate on possible gains in food production, ignoring the fact that human beings, however well-fed, also need *space*. Never-ending population growth would ultimately lead to a shortage of space even if the problem of food supply were solved.

Let us go further, however, and concede to the optimists the feasibility of a hypothetical world of planetary colonization, of human settlements underground and raised above the ground, of food acquired from the oceans or grown in high-yield chemical solutions. Let us concede also that such a world might feed its much larger population *more* adequately than we are fed today on earth. Is it not obvious that even *this* world could only continue to be viable if rapid population growth were to cease? For no matter what science and technology may achieve, the time must come when only stabilization of numbers will avoid disaster.

Alarmist writers on the population problem, on the other hand, are not always clear as to the nature of the disaster they predict if population growth should continue. Frequently, they draw depressing pictures of a future in which the entire surface of the earth has been converted into a human anthill. By extrapolating present growth rates into the future, they suggest that we are heading toward such a world. Yet far more probable than the continuation of population growth to the point where we are faced with an anthill world, is the cessation of growth as a result of a rise in the death rate long before such a level of density is reached. The real issue, therefore, is *how* present growth rates will be lowered: will we be forced to abandon the low mortality we now enjoy and suffer a sharp rise in the death rate, or alternatively, will we cut back on population growth by learning to control our breakaway fertility? For the disaster with which the population explosion actually threatens us is not that we will one day be standing shoulder to shoulder on the

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earth's surface, but that we will lose our control over death and return to the kind of population stability (based on high mortality and fertility) prevailing in pre-modern societies.

In the short run, however, it is the effect of rapid growth on economic development that is the essence of the problem. Strangely, economic development and technical progress are often seen as alternatives to actions and policies designed to arrest population growth. We should, it is sometimes argued, concentrate on encouraging economic progress instead of worrying about birth-control campaigns, for economic progress will obviously permit more people to live at a higher standard of living. In its crudest form, this argument poses more food as an alternative to fewer people. But an odd distortion is involved here. Social scientists who advocate governmental birth-control policies do not see such policies as an *alternative,* but rather as a *prerequisite,* to economic development, no less essential to development than, say, the construction of dams and heavy industry.*

A moderate version of the optimistic position contends that as agrarian peasant societies are modernized, population growth will be slowed up by the mass adoption of family limitation under the new circumstances of urban living, open class systems, and greater material welfare. (This, of course, is what happened when the West achieved modernization.) But high rates of population growth in underdeveloped societies may swamp and destroy all programs for economic development by diverting resources needed for capital investment to meeting spiralling consumer demands.

THERE is a further point of contrast between Western experience and the present situation of the underdeveloped world. Along with the faster decline in the latter's death rate, the greater density and size of its present population, and the lack of migration outlets, some sociologists and demographers have also pointed to the fact that the fertility levels prevailing today in the *tiers monde* are higher than was the case at the beginning of modernization in the West. They relate these higher levels to crucial differences between the Western family system and the so-called joint or consanguineal family systems of Asia and Africa, which are far more conducive to early marriage and to continuous childbearing through the wife's reproductive period. However, the importance of this particular difference may have been overstressed, for the underdeveloped countries possess several advantages over the West so far as prospects of succeeding quickly at fertility reduction are concerned. In the first place, they have achieved national independence in an era when a strong state, assuming full responsibilities for social welfare, has become the norm. Moreover, their traditional religions and value-systems, while containing many injunctions in favor of large families and high fertility, have never made a prime doctrinal tenet of pro-natalism combined with sexual asceticism to the degree that Christianity has—and all branches of Christianity, not merely the Roman Catholic Church. Even the absence of a strong secular humanitarian and libertarian tradition which frowns upon practices like sterilization and abortion (not to speak of infanticide) is an advantage from the standpoint of attaining fertility control. Latin America, the most rapidly growing region and the one with the highest birth rates, is, of course, an exception to these generalizations since its culture and social structure are largely an offshoot of Western civilization. Yet the very fact that it is an exception suggests that the linkage between high fertility and the joint family system may have been overstressed

Given that modernization may be delayed and even prevented by the "premature" adoption of one of its essential features—namely death control—the underdeveloped countries can no more afford to follow a *laissez-faire* policy with respect to population growth than they can with respect to capital accumulation and economic growth itself. But once one speaks of the necessity of state policies designed to cope with population growth, further issues arise. It cannot be assumed that "voluntary" birth-control policies on the Japanese or Indian model are the only ones likely to be adopted: the ominous possibilities of man-made famines and even of direct genocide as means of reducing not population growth but existing over-population are already firmly established in the repertory of 20th-century politics. Hannah Arendt is among the few political thinkers to have recognized this danger. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* she contends that rapid population growth in the huge, overcrowded countries of Asia has created hordes of "superfluous" people who constitute an ever-present temptation to resort to the precedent of political mass murder. And, indeed, a continuation of the pressures of rapid growth is bound to heighten the appeal of totalitarian techniques as a form of drastic demographic surgery, for totalitarianism is essentially a method of disposing of social problems by eliminating whatever and whoever makes them.

But it is by no means certain that mass genocide, demographically motivated wars, or even the milder policy of holding back death-control measures (which *may* be what China is now deliberately doing) could successfully "solve" the population problem. A temporary rise in mortality might facilitate rapid economic development,

* Ansley Coale and Edgar M. Hoover have shown that at present rates of economic growth, per capita income in India would increase by nearly 40 per cent if the birth rate fell by half in one generation.

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which would then lead to the adoption of family planning. But more probably, the result would be a cycle of wars, civil strife, mass bitterness, and apathy that would themselves retard or prevent economic development. It is sometimes argued that the Black Death, which carried away from one-third to one-half of the total population of Europe in the 13th century, was a necessary condition for the later emergence of the Industrial Revolution. But here again we are probably dealing with a confusion between short- and long-run considerations. Even though the Black Death was not a man-made disaster, two centuries of disorder, violence, and cultural lag intervened between its ravages and the immense release of energies we call the Renaissance and the Reformation. And most historians agree that the troubles of this period, "the waning of the Middle Ages," stemmed directly from the trauma of mass death by plague and famine. Would man-made holocausts have a lesser effect?

As FOR the more benign ways of lowering fertility, some of them seem almost as offensive to Western sensibilities as a deliberate increase in the death rate. Western social scientists and medical specialists have generally favored the voluntary use of chemical or mechanical contraceptives by individual couples (the method that is chiefly responsible today for maintaining the relatively low levels of fertility in the Western world itself). But it is beginning to appear that abortion and sterilization may have more appeal to some peoples as forms of birth control than the advanced contraceptive techniques of the West. Nor is it necessarily the case that "the pill"—the yet-to-be perfected oral contraceptive so often seen as the solution to population control in the underdeveloped world—will have greater appeal. In Japan, a decline of 50 per cent in the birth rate in the decade from 1947 to 1957 was achieved largely by means of abortion, which was legalized in 1948. Since 1955, the number of abortions has dropped without a concomitant rise in the birth rate, which suggests that Japanese couples are learning to substitute other methods of birth control. Whether the new methods are mainly contraception or sterilization, however, remains open to dispute. Be that as it may, it seems likely that sterilization will become the favored method of achieving an initial reduction in the birth rate in countries as dissimilar as India and some of the Latin American nations. And since the goal of anti-natalist policies in the underdeveloped world must be to achieve fertility decline *before* rather than after the achievement of full social and economic modernization, it ill behooves Westerners to frown on the adoption of methods like sterilization and abortion. The underdeveloped countries cannot afford to delay fertility reduction until after they have attained the benefits of modernization, and perhaps contraceptive birth control will itself have to be viewed as one of these benefits.

The issue of whether American aid to underdeveloped countries should include advice on birth-control techniques is largely responsible for the fact that the population explosion has become a subject of public debate in this country. Formulating the problem in terms of distant and for the most part non-Christian peoples has doubtless served to moderate potentially rancorous religious differences within the United States concerning these matters. However, it has also allowed us to evade the question of whether it is desirable that the American population should itself continue to soar at its postwar rate. Among the few professional demographers who have confronted this question are Lincoln and Alice Day. Their recently published book, *Too Many Americans,** is refreshingly free from the strident alarmism that characterizes the writings of so many of the amateurs who have dealt with the subject. The Days readily concede that American population growth does not threaten us with the prospect of eventual famine or even declining living standards, for the almost universal practice of birth control among Americans provides a kind of built-in check on further growth should population pressure begin to depress standards of living. It is rather the "quality of life" that is threatened by ever-growing numbers of people: outdoor recreational areas are destroyed; air and water pollution spreads; traffic jams and urban congestion become more common; and the need for centralized administrative controls to provide services to a steadily enlarging clientele reduces personal freedom. The authors might also have stressed that population growth aggravates a great many other social problems we face: unemployment due to automation; the piling up of the poor in urban and rural backwaters; the strain on educational facilities; spiralling racial tensions.

Yet the Days are surely correct in distinguishing sharply between the drastic economic impact of population growth in the underdeveloped world and its less tangible effects on the quality of life in the United States. Catholics and others who take an absolutist position on population issues may go on advancing arguments designed to minimize the role of population growth in retarding economic progress in the underdeveloped world, but the arguments will remain dubious. For when all the misconceptions are cleared away, it becomes brutally apparent that there is no alternative to a decline in population growth, and that the only ways to achieve such a decline are birth control or a relaxation of death control. It is to the credit of the absolutists that they at least draw back from insisting starkly that the latter alternative be chosen.

* Houghton Mifflin Company, 227 pp., $4.95.

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THE LITERATURE OF THE HOLOCAUST

A. Alvarez

IN THE TWENTY YEARS since the war ended the flood of literature on the Nazi atrocities has never slackened; gradually, however, its style has changed and its direction. To the libraries full of documentary material, and the shelf upon shelf of more or less abstract analyses of the madness, a little genuinely creative work is slowly being added. There have, of course, been concentration-camp novels by the hundred, but even setting aside the cheaply sensational, few of them could claim much as literature. With rare exceptions, there are qualities that elude even the best, leaving them in some half-world of art.

The root of the trouble lies in the enormity and the truth of the events they describe. Consider, for example, Josef Bor's *Terezín Requiem** and Elie Wiesel's *Night*,† both serious works by serious men, both well thought of, and both imaginative rehandlings of incidents that really took place. Bor's work is about a performance of Verdi's *Requiem*, conducted by Raphael Schacter in the Theresienstadt ghetto in Czechoslovakia. The subtitle is "A Narrative of the Human Spirit"—justifiably, for the whole thing was an extraordinary triumph: the organization of a big choir, soloists, and orchestra, constant rehearsals, and a final performance in the teeth of the Nazis, the transports, and the whole chaos of the time. It is, in short, a real-life allegory of art poising itself precariously against destruction.

Night is more personal and very much more painful, less an allegory than a scantily fictionalized autobiography. A young boy and his father are transported from a Hungarian ghetto to Auschwitz, where they endure months of degradation, brutality, and hunger. Finally, as the Red Army closes in, they are evacuated through the frozen countryside to Buchenwald. There the father dies slowly of dysentery, while his son nurses him fearfully, guiltily, resentfully. It is here, not in the cruelty, that the sense of shock which vibrates so continuously through the book is located:

> I did not weep, and it pained me that I could not weep. But I had no more tears. And, in the depths of my being, in the recesses of my weakened conscience, could I have searched it, I might perhaps have found something like—free at last!

Wiesel's pain lies in the discovery that neither love, filial piety, nor his intense Talmudic training can stand up against extremes of starvation and fear. On the road to survival everything goes, leaving only the most primitive terrors and desires.

As a human document, *Night* is almost unbearably painful, and certainly beyond criticism. But like *The Terezín Requiem* and dozens of other equally sincere, equally distressing books, it is a failure as a work of art. As the passage above shows, when what Wiesel has to say becomes intolerable for him, he falls back on rhetoric. The terror and the failure are stated, but their real potency is never quite expressed. So they become unreal, remote, something out there. Perhaps the answer to that is a massive "*So what?* The atrocities and their exposure are more urgent than art." I don't believe this, and for reasons beyond the obvious one: that from the fragile, tentative, individual discriminations of art emerge precisely those moral values which, if understood and accepted, would make totalitarian atrocities impossible.

It is partly a question of time. The atrocities have in no way been diminished by their twenty years' distance, but their meaning has changed slightly, and in changing it has become more, rather than less, urgent. In the beginning, the horror of the camps was heightened by a certain relief—"Thank God it wasn't me"—and this in turn provoked guilt. To judge from their writing, even former inmates seem to have felt obscurely guilty at having survived when friends and family had gone under—as though survival were almost a mark of cowardice, as though it certainly meant, for them, that they had had to compromise with the omnipresent and contagious corruption. For the rest of us, there was the far obscurer guilt of being Jews who had never been exposed to the camps at all. In these circumstances, the rhetoric of so much concentration-camp literature was comforting; it enabled us to feel engaged while in reality preserving our safe distance. Since then the situation has changed. The question of survival is less obvious, but more ubiquitous, more pervasive. I once suggested (in a piece for the *Atlantic Monthly*, December 1962) that one of the reasons why the camps continue to keep such a tight hold on our imaginations is that we see in them a small-scale trial run for a nuclear war. Between 1940 and 1945, four-and-a-half-million people died in Auschwitz; the same number would die in minutes if a hydrogen bomb landed on London or New York. Then there are those other curious, upside-down similarities: the use of modern industrial processes for the mass production

* Knopf, 112 pp., $3.50.

† Hill & Wang (1960), 116 pp., $3.00 (cloth), $1.35 (paper).

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of corpses, with all the attendant paraphernalia of efficiency, meticulous paperwork, and bureaucratic organization; the deliberate annihilation not merely of lives but of identities, as in some paranoid vision of a mass culture. And so on. It adds up to a perverted, lunatic parody of our own engulfing but otherwise comfortable technological societies. So the literature of the camps has become, insidiously and unanswerably, our own under-literature. Its connections with our lives, our despairs, our fantasies are subterranean but constant and powerful. When the façade of our bright, jazzy, careless affluence rifts, and our well-conditioned domestic psyches explode, what oozes out is the same sour destructiveness—passive or active, the need to destroy or be destroyed—as once, for some years, contaminated almost the whole of European morality. If our century has invented unprecedented ways of making life easier, it has also provided us with multitudinous, sophisticated, and equally unprecedented means of annihilation. The camps are a proof of that, and a working model. In them the language of our sickness was created.

ALL THIS is more or less cliché, more or less accepted. The problem is to know to what extent the acceptance implies understanding, and the understanding affects our behavior:

> Probably, we shall never be able to determine the psychic havoc of the concentration camps and the atom bomb upon the unconscious mind of almost everyone alive in these years. For the first time in civilized history, perhaps for the first time in all of history, we have been forced to live with the suppressed knowledge that the smallest facets of our personality or the most minor projection of our ideas, or indeed the absence of ideas and the absence of personality could mean equally well that we might still be doomed to die as a cipher in some vast statistical operation in which our teeth would be counted, and our hair would be saved, but our death itself would be unknown, unhonored, and unremarked, a death which could not follow with dignity as a possible consequence to serious actions we had chosen, but rather a death by *deus ex machina* in a gas chamber or a radioactive city. . . . The Second World War presented a mirror to the human condition which blinded anyone who looked into it. For if tens of millions were killed in concentration camps out of the inexorable agonies and contractions of super-states founded upon the always insoluble contradictions of injustice, one was then obliged also to see that no matter how crippled and perverted an image of man was the society he had created, it was nonetheless his creation, his collective creation (at least his collective creation from the past) and if society was so murderous, then who could ignore the more hideous of questions about his own nature?

That is how Norman Mailer began "The White Negro." His thesis was that contemporary stresses were so great that psychopathic behavior had become an existential necessity. But I presume that he was defining something rather closer to himself than hipsterism; rather, he was working out how he could preserve his identity *as a creative artist* against the sheerness, violence, and anonymity of his society. The answer he came up with was: By behaving badly. Since the camps and the bomb were also created in our image, then anything goes.

There seems a certain paradoxical sanity in this. The camps are no longer such "a world apart" as they were when David Rousset wrote his book of that name, and they seem to be getting increasingly closer. Indeed, something like the Eichmann, Dering, and Frankfurt Trials should, I think, be continually in progress, not for the sake of revenge —which is a concept scarcely relevant to such obscenities and so many million deaths—nor to humiliate the Germans—which seems, anyway, to be impossible—but simply to remind us of the kind of society we have created, and what we are capable of.

Anyone trying to create imaginative art out of the experience of the concentration camps has to face much the same problems as Mailer defined in "The White Negro," but in a much more extreme form. He has, in fact, to do the impossible. He must create a coherent artistic world out of one which was the deliberate negation of all values. He must exercise his imagination on situations which, in proved, lived fact, were beyond the imagination, and on circumstances where the imagination, with its power of making things come nervously close, was potentially the most dangerous and destructive of all qualities. He has to take the utterly psychopathic as his norm, and make art out of the forces of anti-art.

It is here that so many of the holocaust novels fail. Wiesel and Bor, for example, both write as though the stories they told were essentially like any other—however much more terrible; as though, that is, they were available to normal human values. If the results seem excessive, even a bit journalistic, that is less because the authors overwrite than because the feelings are so fiercely present in the barest recital of the facts that any attempt to elaborate, underline, or explain them seems like wild overstatement. The process by which a child is not merely forced to witness the gradual death of his father, but is also forced to acknowledge that he is glad and relieved when the old man dies—in short, when he psychically becomes his father's murderer—may fit naturally enough into the shorthand of dreams and psychosis; it is, however, beyond the conventional language of guilt and grief and suffering. Similarly, the episode Bor describes is beyond propaganda, even propaganda for the human spirit. The camps, of course, can be used devastatingly for political ends, as the Israeli and Eastern European governments well know (Poland now has a Department of Martyrology specifically for

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this). But in being so used, they lose a good deal of their inner truth and power; they become, in a way, less important.

THE DIFFICULTY is to find language for this world without values, with its meticulously controlled lunacy and bureaucracy of suffering. Perhaps the most convincing way is that by which dreams express anguish: by displacement, disguise, and indirection. The most powerful exception is the Pole, Tadeusz Borowski, who alone managed to convey the full force of the concentration camp experience while he was still close to it in time.* His style is curt, icy, and brutally direct; and he assuaged his survivor's guilt by a kind of moral self-destruction: he identified with the evil he described. Although in reality he is said to have behaved with great courage in Auschwitz, in his stories he transforms and degrades himself. The first-person singular narrator is well up in the prisoners' hierarchy and well in with it; he is a politico, a spiv with a cushy job, egotistical, well-fed, and mostly impervious to the horrors around him. His anger is all for the weakness of those who go under, forcing him into the parallel weakness of being shocked and sickened. Indeed, anger is the dominant, the determining force in these stories. Czeslaw Milosz, writing of Borowski in *The Captive Mind,* called him "a frustrated lover." He meant, I take it, that the springs of feeling were poisoned in Borowski by the facts he had to face, leaving only a dry rage that such things should be. So all he could do was present a bare record of how and why love had to fail. Borowski himself has been quoted as describing his work as "a journey to the utmost limit of a certain kind of morality." But he eventually took the step beyond that limit. His anger turned increasingly on himself; he gave up his creative work and immersed himself increasingly in Stalinist politics. Finally, having escaped the Zyklon B of Auschwitz, he gassed himself at home in 1951.

Borowski's work brings home the full double force of that phrase, *l'univers concentrationnaire.* It refers not only to the closed world without value of the camps, but also to the insupportable concentration of the universe on one man's back. It suggests what happens when a sensitive man experiences so much that he can no longer properly cope with his reactions, and the burden of them becomes intolerable. All that remains to do is to record the bare facts clearly, sharply, and without comment. The judgments are there by omission. Around Borowski's stories there is a kind of moral silence, like the pause which follows a scream.

Something of the same method was used by the brilliant young Polish director, Andrzej Munk, in his recent, though posthumous, film about Auschwitz, *The Passenger.* The main story concerns an ambivalent, deviously Lesbian conflict between a German woman overseer and a Polish prisoner. But it is played out against a background of routine, rather than polemic, horror: children queue docilely for the gas-chamber, while a comfortable, fatherly German soldier sets in order the pellets of Zyklon B; the incinerators belch thick, human smoke, and nobody notices; the whistle of a transport bringing new "material" interrupts a Bach concert, at which the camp staff sit poker-backed, proper and smilingly absorbed; the camp orchestra tootles away while the corpses are brought in after the day's labor; the S.S. amuse themselves with nightmare sports with naked women and dogs. The brutalities are casual, habitual, anonymous, and to one side. Emotionally, they seem to occur only in one corner of the screen.

Like Borowski, Munk died before his time, killed in a car crash before he could finish *The Passenger.* Considering the minute amount of traffic in Poland, even in 1961, this in itself was almost an achievement. Yet it seems, in a way, to have been inevitable. The concentration camps are a dangerous topic to handle. They stir mud from the bottom, clouding the mind, rousing dormant self-destructiveness. In the last few years I personally have known half-a-dozen suicides or near suicides; and each has prefaced his act with a fierce immersion in the literature of the camps. That is why I suggested that these places, these crimes, have an existential meaning beyond politics or shock or pity. They have become symbols of our own in-turned nihilism, which their disproportionately vast scale heightens, even justifies, by making individual suffering seem so insignificant. In his fumbling way, I imagine Arthur Miller was after something like this when he thumbed an emotional lift from Dachau in *After the Fall.* Granted, he cheapened all those deaths by using them to say things which were trite, vulgar, and reeking of self-pity. But quality apart, there was a kind of sense in his maneuver: the camps have become a focus of contemporary suffering. The worse things get, the closer and more meaningful they become; as in some modern Grail Legend, everyone was wounded by that Dolorous Stroke. So the crime against humanity, as Mailer suggested, becomes also a projection of one's own inner violence and misery. Clearly, it is at this point that the apparently trivial aesthetic question of tone becomes vital.

Borowski's ultimate brutality with himself helped him to take the camps straight and yet make art out of them. More recently, a number of holocaust books have appeared which are surprisingly convincing as novels in their own right. But a great deal of the imaginative effort which

* Two of his stories have appeared in translation: "A Day at Harmenz" is in *The Modern Polish Mind,* ed. Maria Kuncewitz, Little, Brown & Co., 440 pp., $8.50; and "This Way for the Gas" is in COMMENTARY, July 1962. They were originally in collections published in Poland in 1946 and 1948.

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went into them is devoted to finding ways round the basic premise: "I am the man, I suffered, I was there."

The least evasive, most conventional, and probably earliest (the dates of the original publications are not given in the translations) are the stories of the Czech writer Arnost Lustig, *Night and Hope** and *Diamonds in the Night*†. These have something of Borowski's directness, but they lack almost entirely that sense the Pole gives of the utter decadence and corruption of everyone in the camps, particularly the narrator and his fellow prisoners. Lustig's figures have the remnants of a certain pathetic loyalty to each other, and a certain pitiable innocence. And for a good reason, which is also the source of the stories' power: his murderous, agile scarecrows, who treat death, starvation, and pain as casually as the weather, are all children. It is only when you pause to take this in—Lustig never insists on it, scarcely even bothers to mention it—that the stories become unthinkable.

*Herod's Children,*** a recent novel by an Austrian, Ilse Aichinger, has the same subject—a group of young, mostly Jewish, children in Nazi Vienna—but the treatment is the exact opposite of Lustig's. The style of *Herod's Children* is oblique, poetic, and highly-strung as a racehorse. The young heroine wanders through the book in a kind of hallucinated trance in which sharp impressions, insights, symbols, action, and fragments of poetry continually shift and merge. The book has about it an air of slightly transposed high feeling which I don't much like, a sensitivity so acute that it ends by being sensitive only to itself. It is saved from hyperaesthesia only by the harshness of the events it describes, and by a feeling, common to all holocaust literature, of desperation of purpose—as though writing the novel were the author's only hope of survival. The result is something like a dream: full of odd shifts and flights and happenings, and infused with unbearable but continually displaced emotion.

Aichinger's dream of sensitivity in the teeth of horror, and Lustig's tender yet indignant factuality, both manage to present visions of childhoods twisted beyond all possible repair, yet still retaining something of their original alertness and spontaneous generosity. They also represent the two most obvious and accepted solutions for coming to terms with the camps. The Czech's unflickering sense of fact is a way in for a political interpretation; his stories could be used as documents (and have been). In contrast, the Austrian's sensitivity is an oblique insistence on art and personal interpretation as the only possible means of salvation or understanding. But both miss something of the adult sense of intolerable violence right under the skin, of the camps exploding *at this instant* in our lives.

It is this quality which is achieved in two of the most complete and original disaster novels, which are also the most recent: Jorge Semprun's *The Long Voyage*†† and Piotr Rawicz's *Blood from the Sky*.*** Both were originally written in French, though neither author is a Frenchman (Semprun was born in Spain, Rawicz in the Ukraine); both have a studiedly Parisian manner, hard, clever, cynical, highly intellectual; both find imaginative ways around the atrocities, so that they tap the reserves of threat and terror without ever quite meeting them head-on. Otherwise they are totally different.

Rawicz never mentions the concentration camps, though he himself was in three of them. He has written a strange portmanteau of a novel, stuffed with fantasies, poems, parables, bits of philosophy, and a lunatic humor which is rarely funny but often frightening. The hold-all in which all these notes and queries are packed is the story of a young, wealthy, highly cultivated Ukrainian Jew who, thanks to blond hair, blue eyes, and cunning, escapes the camps altogether. He is doomed to live, with an alias and an identity not his own, while his whole society is being exterminated. And he is by no means certain if he has the better bargain. The fantastic threat of the story comes and goes, yet remains compulsive. Oddly enough, the fragments and diversions strengthen it. The sour-mouthed poems, the notes on disgust, weary meditations and mad allegories, all contribute to the same condemnation: the whole world has become murderous, hypocritical, corrupt, and moneygrubbing; and the victims are as contaminated as their torturers. The Jews, the Nazis, and the Jew-hating, German-hating Poles all swim in the same filth; the effort to keep afloat only provokes in the author weariness and self-disgust. It is an imaginative projection of the dead-end moral nihilism embodied in the camps. If at times the writing is too brittle, the brilliance too "brilliant," the cynicism too tricksy, these may be necessary defenses. Like Dante's *terza rima*, they are a means of preserving a degree of detachment between the artist and the inferno; they insulate the book from the screaming and outrage in the next room, and also from a pity which could not be handled.

WHERE Rawicz uses diversionary tactics to convey intensities which he could not otherwise express, Semprun, in a unique way, seems wholly to have assimilated his experience in Buchenwald. Granted, *The Long Voyage* is not quite about his time there; his subject is the journey to the camp and the return, but by using a complicated Proustian time-scheme, he transforms this into a summation of his whole life. The figures from his childhood,

* Dutton, 206 pp., $3.95.
† Arthur Vanous, 273 pp., $.90.
** Atheneum, 238 pp., $4.50.
†† Grove, 240 pp., $4.50.
*** Harcourt, Brace & World, 316 pp., $4.95.

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his companions in the Resistance, his fellow transportees and camp inmates, the S.S., the guards, the peasants from the neighboring German village, and the liberators are all seen *sub specie* of the concentration camp. Semprun uses Buchenwald and the knowledge of what happened in the same way as Matthew Arnold used his literary touchstones. How do people measure up to it as men? How do they react, justify their part in the process, or their refusal to see? What is the mentality of the modern bureaucratic killer, his accomplices, and his victims? How do you choose or fail to choose your fate when the conditions become so extreme that you can no longer avoid the responsibility?

Semprun's style is tough—tougher perhaps for being excellently translated into Hemingwayese—but the toughness is not of a muscle-flexing kind. It is, instead, a question of a certain hardness of intelligence, probing away at the complex fate of having an identity. He is also—and this alone would make him unique in the field—genuinely funny at times, with the burnt-out wit of a man who has come through: "Remember, getting there is half the fun," the narrator remarks to his companion when the going gets particularly rough. In this poised, questioning setting, the rare details of camp horror—such as a ghastly hunt of Jewish children by the S.S. and their dogs—explode like some shouted obscenity.

What Semprun is doing, in short, is exploring the possibilities of human behavior in inhuman circumstances. The extreme situation is a catalyst which works in two ways: it either disintegrates a personality or precipitates it. He is trying to demonstrate imaginatively that from the absence itself of morality a morality can emerge. And this seems to have been a part of the experience as it really was. One of the most moving moments of the Dering trial in London* came in the testimony of a French woman doctor: soon after she arrived in Auschwitz she asked a colleague, also a woman, whether or not she should cooperate with the S.S. in their experiments. The other doctor replied, in effect, "We have probably only a few weeks to live. In that time we can at least try to behave like human beings." Semprun's achievement is to have made this form of bare moral survival into an aesthetic, creative procedure. Instead of taking the easy way out—sensationalism, journalism, hysteria, self-pity—he uses intelligence, humor, and pity to make something positive out of hell. The technical accomplishment is an image of the personal achievement involved. If the book was hard to write, it must have been doubly hard to have arrived at the point of being able to write it in that way.

Rawicz's effort, on the other hand, is channeled in the opposite direction; he makes his art out of disintegration. His hero survives by an act of treason to himself and his people, by assuming an identity which is his own turned upside down; the aristocratic Jewish poet comes through by becoming a cloddish, anti-Semitic Ukrainian farmhand. Inevitably, this betrayal of himself produces guilt, nightmare, and the glimmerings of madness. Hence Rawicz's schizophrenic style—a style, that is, dictated by what the psychologists call "inappropriateness of affect": trivial incidents provoke despair, and horrors make for icy control or manic humor; nowhere is it ever possible wholly to get through to anyone else.

Before Semprun and Rawicz published their novels, the literature of the concentration camps was a specialized subject, a subdivision of the history of an insult to humanity. The real destructive nihilism acted out in the camps was expressed artistically only in works like Beckett's *Endgame* or *Waiting for Godot,* in which the naked unaccommodated man is reduced to the role of helpless, hopeless, impotent comic, who talks and talks and talks in order to postpone for a while the silence of his own desolation. But this was only an abstraction from *l'univers concentrationnaire,* an echo at best of its state of mind. *The Long Voyage* and *Blood from the Sky,* however, provide two opposite ways of coping with the nihilism at the same time as they show it in action; they people hell and describe its geography. By making it potent to the imagination, they make it also relevant to our own, mercifully more humdrum lives. And this, as Rawicz insists in the postscript to his book, is the purpose of the whole operation:

> *This book is not a historical record.*
>
> If the notion of chance (like most other notions) did not strike the author as absurd, he would gladly say that any reference to a particular period, territory, or race is purely coincidental.
>
> The events that he describes could crop up in any place, at any time, in the mind of any man, planet, mineral. . . .

*See Mary Ellmann's article in the July COMMENTARY.

A. ALVAREZ, *the well-known British literary critic, is the author of* Stewards of Excellence *and* The School of Donne.

* * *

"IN NEW YORK YOU GET SWALLOWED BY A HORSE"

Oscar Lewis

WE HAD BEEN talking of this and that when I asked him, "Have you ever been in New York, Hector?"

"Yes, yes, I've been to New York."

"And what did you think of life there?"

"New York! I want no part of it! Man, do you know what it's like? You get up in a rush, have breakfast in a rush, get to work in a rush, go home in a rush, even shit in a rush. That's life in

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New York! Not for me! Never again! Not unless I was crazy.

"Look, I'll explain. The way things are in New York, you'll get nothing there. But nothing! It's different in Puerto Rico. Here, if you're hungry, you come to me and say, 'Man, I'm broke, I've had nothing to eat.' And I'd say, *'Ay, Bendito!* Poor thing!' And I'd give you some food. No matter what, you wouldn't have to go to bed hungry. Here in Puerto Rico you can make out. But in New York, if you don't have a nickel, or twenty cents, you're worthless, and that's for sure. You don't count. You get swallowed by a horse!

"Don't mention New York to me, man! I suffered too much there. I had to sleep in the street, in alleys and doorways. When that happened, I went two or three days without a bite of food. If I approached anyone and told him I hadn't eaten, he'd just say, 'Get out of here!' If you ask for food in New York that's all the answer you get; you won't find a soul who'll give you a nickel or a bit of bread or a plate of rice. No *'Ay, Bendito'* there, *muchacho.* There you have to look out for yourself. If you're one of those teenager bums, the kind who goes around asking for hand-outs, New York will make a man out of you. Because if you don't work, you starve.

"What made me decide to go to New York? Nothing special, really. I had problems with my family, so I left home and went to work for a couple of weeks until I saved enough to pay my fare. When I got there, I went to my uncle's on 138th Street, in the Bronx. And you know? I was broke because I had to pay ten dollars' taxi fare from the airport. Ten dollars! All I had left was seventy-five cents.

"So you know what happens? Your uncle, being a relative, gives you room and board for a week while you look for a job. You're still jobless by the end of the week? Well, *muchacho,* you haven't got a chance. Because, right off, your uncle kicks you out. Now, suppose you did find a job. Your uncle may decide to let you stay on with him. That'll be twelve dollars at least. Twelve dollars for three meals a day and a room to keep your clothes in. And don't think he'll allow his wife to do your washing. Oh, no! You'll have to take it to the laundry. You'll have to pay all your other expenses too . . . beer, everything! Your life isn't worth a plugged nickel there. Just like the songs says, *'La vida no vale na'.'*

"That's not the worst of it, either. Let me tell you, boy, New York's a madhouse. You can live twenty years in the same building without ever getting acquainted with your next-door neighbor. Twenty years! My friends here say, 'Oh, New York! It's so pretty, so wonderful, the best!' But if you stop to look at the city, what is it? Nothing but big, big buildings. Just walls and windows.

"Then I explain to my friends about New York in winter. Closed doors, closed windows, no people. If you do see people, you just see them walking. Walking, walking, all the time. You can't stop to talk to them because you are rushing off to work. Besides, you'll freeze. When I wanted to go out I had to put on a coat and an overcoat, woolen underwear, wool pants, three pairs of woolen socks. I'd go out bundled up in all those clothes and, man, my legs would shake with cold. Comes winter, people in New York put their milk bottles on the window sills and don't need a refrigerator at all. Spit outdoors and it turns to ice before it hits the ground!

"In New York, you freeze in the winter and bake in summer. My little girl had one cold after another, fevers, all kinds of illnesses there. Here, blessed be God, she hasn't had so much as a running nose since we returned. How can anyone compare New York with Puerto Rico, with the sun and the pretty flowers and things we have here?

"Sure, some guys have good luck in New York and like it there. Some even make a lot of money. Suppose you want to get rich. First thing you do is begin to sell narcotics or get into the numbers racket. Gambling in New York can make you a profit of ninety cents to the dollar. If you manage to sell drugs for a whole year without getting caught by the police, you'll make eight, twelve thousand dollars for sure. On the other hand, if the cops catch you, you get ten years in Atlanta Federal Penitentiary. So, tell me, which would you rather have?

"We honest people, who don't know how to get mixed up in a racket, just have to work. But it takes some doing to get a job. To find a job in New York you have to really take yourself in hand. To get from where you live to the street, you have to go down a lot of steps because the houses are four or five stories high. You go down those stairs and if you don't want to get lost—like I did that first time—you stop in front of the door and take a good look at your building and at the one across the way. So you will remember, see? It's easy to get lost there. I've cried like a baby in those New York streets where you can get lost worse than in a jungle. There'll be a lot of people around you, but what do the sons of bitches do when you ask for help? They'll realize you're a rookie and they'll say, 'Go that way,' and it'll be the wrong way so you'll get more lost and the hell with you.

"Here in San Juan you can go up to anybody and say, 'Pardon me, where is Cristo Street?' or Tanca Street or any street you want to find and whoever you ask stops and listens. If you happen to ask someone in a car that's going your way he'll say, 'Hop in, I'll take you there.' But not in New York!

"WELL, so you're looking for a job and you start walking. Man, how long, how long are the streets of New York! You can walk and walk and never get to the end of them. While you walk you keep

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your eyes peeled for places where they might hire someone. You go into a shop. 'Do you need a man to work here?' In some places they tell you 'No.' In other places they say, 'I don't speak Spanish.' You just walk on and on and on. One time, you know what happened to me? I went to this place and they had a *latino* there, the son of a bitch. I knew he was a *latino,* so I went and talked to him in Spanish. I said, '*Muchacho,* you know, I'm down and out. I'm broke, see, and I'm looking for a job.'

"This son of a great whore answered in English, 'Wat you min? I no spik Spanish.' I'm telling you, it's the Puerto Ricans themselves who'll be your worst enemies in New York.

"So you keep on walking until you finally land a job. At least that's the way I got mine, at a brassiere factory. I was hired as shipping clerk for forty dollars a week. I had ambition, you know, that thing that makes a man want to earn more, and I paid attention and learned my job and was promoted to another department and another and another. Five years I worked there. The most I ever earned was seventy-five dollars a week and I had to work hard for it. Because in New York you have to work, really work, see?

"Here in Puerto Rico you have more freedom. You can stand on a street corner, in a park—you can even stand in front of the Governor's Palace all day long and nobody asks you to move on or interferes with you in any way. Not in New York. That's not allowed there.

"When you land a job they give you a form to fill out. You look at it and think, 'What's this all about?' You have to fill it out, see? So you read it, if you can read English. If you can't you're out of luck. They ask you your name, where were you born, are you single or do you have a couple of children and a wife to support. Two children plus a wife makes three, right? That's four people to support counting you, because you support yourself, too. You start with a salary of forty-two dollars. If you have four people to support, they won't deduct a cent, not one single cent, from your pay check. But if you mark that bit of paper with a circle around the word 'Single,' then you're done for.

"Out of forty-two dollars, all you'll get your hands on is thirty-two. Out of those thirty-two, you'll pay ten dollars for a room, if you're lucky. And you won't have it to yourself . . . you'll be sharing it with the rats. You can't expect a nice room for ten dollars a week. Then there's the laundry, and breakfast, lunch, and dinner. How much will be left after you pay all that? Just figure it out.

"By that time, you'll be wanting to get back to Puerto Rico, but you haven't been able to save a cent to pay your fare. So you write, '*Mami,* things are bad here and I want to go back. Send me money for my fare.'

"Suppose when you filled in that little paper you said you had a family to support. The police come around to investigate, to see if you told the truth. If it turns out you're single, man! you have to return every cent they were supposed to deduct. All the tax money. If not, you'll land in jail. So, which would you choose? No, man! *Deja eso.* Leave New York alone. You can't live there. You just can't live. You get swallowed by a horse!

"I GOT sick shortly after I had started working. *Ave María!* I was in the hospital two months and felt so bad that every night I thought I wouldn't live to see the next morning. My girl friend rushed over to see me the minute she heard I was in the hospital. She came every day for a whole month in every kind of weather: rain, thunder, lightning, freezing cold. If it rained fire she would still have come. We were not really sweethearts or engaged at that time, but we went out together and liked each other and all.

"When I went back to work I kept thinking, 'They'll fire me, they'll fire me, for sure. I'm new here, just arrived from Puerto Rico and I was out so long . . .' At the factory, I didn't speak to anybody. I just sort of sneaked in and looked at the time cards. When I saw mine was still there, oh, man! hope stirred in me. Hope, that beautiful thing. You know what I mean? After seeing my card, I went to work.

"The man from the office came in and I tried to explain, 'Oh, sir, I'm sorry . . . you know . . . I was . . .'

" 'Never mind, man! We had a call from the hospital letting us know you were sick. Social Security called, too, to tell us you were hospitalized. So never mind. Just get to work.'

"When it was time to go home, what happened? They asked me to go to the office. Oh, my God! My heart leaped into my throat. I thought, 'Now they're going to fire me.'

"I go to the office and they tell me, 'You've worked here for such and such a length of time and, let's see . . .' Then they start bringing out papers and more papers . . . man! I was sweating. Then that man grabs a paper and gives me an envelope. I didn't open it. I swear, I didn't dare open it. I just thought, 'I'm fired.' I put it in my pocket and walked out. I got home and was taking off my shirt and shoes when my sweetheart walks in. 'Oh, baby, look here. I'm afraid they've fired me. Get that envelope in my shirt pocket and open it. I'd rather you saw it first.'

"She opened the envelope. 'Look here, Hector. It's a check!'

" 'A check? You must be going blind, girl.' Then I looked, and what do I see? Man! I couldn't believe my eyes! A check for two-hundred-forty-five dollars! Payment for three or four weeks of illness plus per diem or something, I don't know. Two-hundred-forty-five dollars! That's when I really started sweating and my legs began to tremble all over.

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"Next day, when I got to work, one of my friends calls me, 'Hector, come here.' Then he gives me another envelope with forty-five dollars that had been collected among the other workers. There were nine-hundred workers in that company. After that I really threw myself into my work. What with the two hundred and forty-five and the money my friends collected and the work I did that week, I was able to tell my sweetheart, 'Look, baby, you know what? I don't want a fancy wedding. This money is enough for us to get married on.' So we did. We got married. And that woman has turned out to be straight as a shot. What a woman! She still looks at me like on the first day. She's with me all the way. She adores me, you know. She loves me completely.

"My wife and I both had to work. I was paid on Friday and she on Saturday and by the time Friday came around again we didn't have any money. Not one cent. I had to pay ninety-six dollars rent for a tiny apartment. The bedroom barely had room for a bed and a crib. The front room was even smaller. For ninety-six dollars!

"In New York if you owe a month's rent, the landlady sends you a bit of paper. Suppose you're two months behind in your rent, you haven't been able to land a job and you spend your time walking like crazy looking for work because you have your wife and child to take care of, and all sorts of debts. You know what'll happen to you? One evening after walking the streets like a madman, you get home and you find your furniture piled up on the sidewalk in the rain, the snow, the heat, in no matter what weather, because the sheriff came with a court order. It won't make any difference that your wife or child is sick, or that you've tried hard to look for a job and it isn't your fault you haven't found one. That's New York for you.

"You have to watch out how you go at things, see? And you need luck in New York, especially to choose a woman and to get married, because there a woman can get away with anything. Suppose you get married. Then one day you come home from work. You've had a hard day. You got out of bed in a hurry, had breakfast in a hurry, went to work in a hurry, and hurried home, tired, worn out. And what do you find? There's your wife in bed with another man. You rush out to get the cops so they can see what's going on. Then, what happens? She wins! Even if you screw your soul working all day long to provide for her needs, she'll win all the same. If you slap her, she'll go and call the cops. Slap a woman! Don't dream of it! You get six months in jail, see? Not just a fine —jail! If you kill the man, you'll fry for it. That kind of thing isn't allowed there. No, sir!

"New York is a crazy place. Suppose you have children. You take off your belt and whack them a couple of times. If you do it in front of a cop, you get six months. And if you should leave a bruise, *muchacho!* you're really out of luck. That's why things are so screwed up in New York. That's why there's so much evil, so many criminals, so many gangs. How could it be otherwise? A place where you can't even beat your own wife and children!

"In New York a dog is worth more than a man. Yes, sir, only three things are valued there, dogs, women, and children! As long as you're a minor, you can kill, belong to a gang, steal, or raise hell. No matter what you do, you won't fry, see? Of course, if you're a woman you can get away with anything as long as you live. But if you're a man and over twenty-one and you so much as pick up a stone and aim it at a dog, it means six months in jail. If you hit the dog, it's worse. You can't even defend yourself. Women and dogs can attack you any time and you lose the case, no matter what. Know why? It's the law. That's the way it's written, man. And if you never heard of that law, you're sunk. After you're twenty-one you're an adult and know what you are doing, see? A dog can't talk, so he wins, but *you* get eaten by a horse.

"It was because of a woman that I left New York and returned to Puerto Rico. One day I went to work. It was a Monday and when I got there I found about twelve badly made brassieres at my place. The girl claimed I was the one who had sewn them. I told her, 'Damn it to hell, you're a liar! You might have noticed that I work a two-needle machine and these were made with a single needle. You were the one who made them!' But women can get away with anything there. They can call a man an imbecile, a fool and anything else they please. She called me all those names. Man! She'd better have kept her mouth shut because I just grabbed that bundle and was going to crack her skull with it when the foreman came up and said, 'Hector, what are you doing? She's a *woman*. Stop that! Don't go looking for trouble.'

"I said, 'Give me my money because I'm leaving. Quick, right now.'

"So he takes me to the office. The boss says, 'Think it over, Hector. You've worked with us several years. You've made a lot of friends who are very fond of you. Yet you want to leave over a little thing like this?'

"Then I said, 'This isn't all. How about that raise you promised me? I've never seen it. And on top of everything else that idiot calls me a fool in front of everyone. I'm quitting. If I stay I'll be in trouble for sure, because next time I'll really break her head. I don't want to argue any more. Make arrangements so I can get my money and leave.'

"I worked the rest of that day and on Tuesday I took a plane to Puerto Rico. Now I'm thankful to that woman. I am infinitely thankful to her. If it hadn't been for her, I'd still be stuck there."

All this time, Hector and I had been talking in the restaurant where he worked. The bartender

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had been listening to our conversation while he washed the glasses and cleaned up. It was late and the place was completely deserted except for us and another man who worked in the kitchen. When Hector stopped speaking, the bartender leaned over the bar and, looking straight at Hector, said in a booming voice, "New York, the best in the world!"

Hector and I turned around in surprise.

"Yes, sir. The best in the world. Whoever hasn't lived in New York, hasn't lived. In New York, there's money to burn. When I arrived I bought a bakery for a thousand dollars and after nine months, I sold it for seven thousand. New York is good, son, if you can't be happy in New York, you can't be happy anywhere. It's the best in the world."

OSCAR LEWIS *is the author of, among other books,* The Children of Sanchez *and* Pedro Martínez.

* * *

TEVYE ON BROADWAY

Irving Howe

SHOLEM ALEICHEM was a genius, Zero Mostel is a genius. Add the two together and the result ought to be extraordinary: a union of talents and souls, the comic master of a vanishing tradition and the virtuoso of stage expressiveness. But in *Fiddler on the Roof*,* a musical play based on Sholem Aleichem's stories, the result is not at all extraordinary. It is disheartening, not least in its skill and charm; commonplace, in all but Mostel's solo entertainments.

Among American actors who but Zero Mostel could play, could *be*, Tevye the Dairyman? Suppose he rented himself a theater, stood alone on a bare stage and simply read from an English translation of Sholem Aleichem. Suppose, while keeping his "script" intact, he allowed himself to improvise accompanying gesture: to act out the parts, to dance the rhythms, to hum a bit of obbligato, to wriggle his glorious fat body as a mode of italics, to let the jokes emerge from their authentic context and the sadness from the accumulated windings of the stories, to work at his own pace—leisurely, reflectively, with the right variations and coda—and not have to worry that a big production number would soon sweep him off the stage. Suppose, that is, Zero Mostel let his comic gift come into a ripe and unmediated relationship to the gift of Sholem Aleichem. Even if one judged the result in some sense a failure, wouldn't it still be a joy and a wonder?

But what Jerome Robbins has directed, and Zero Mostel acquiesced in, is a tasteless jumble of styles: some in good, others in bad, and therefore the whole in no taste. The "book" provided by Joseph Stein is closer in tone and quality to Harry Golden (sometimes Gertrude Berg) than to Sholem Aleichem, and the production, despite its expensiveness of surface, reflects the spiritual anemia of Broadway and of the middle-class Jewish world which by now seems firmly linked to Broadway.

Sholem Aleichem is deprived of his voice, his pace, his humane cleverness and boxed into the formula of a post-*Oklahoma* musical: the gags, the folksy bounce, the archness, the "dream sequences," the fiercely athletic dances. Zero Mostel is exhibited, sometimes brilliantly, but he is also corrupted by the trivial paraphernalia of a "lavish production," by a book, libretto, and score that through expert professionalism rise to the mediocre, and most of all, by the lack of thoughtful or even thought-out direction, so that part of the time Mostel is trying to realize a character, part of the time to set the house on fire with his inspired antics, and all of the time seems oppressed by an awareness that he has to carry the whole business on his own shoulders. Too many matchmakers have crossed up the union between Sholem Aleichem and Mostel: hack lyricists and composers, a choreographer (Jerome Robbins) whose work has become so slick as finally to be sterile, and a collection of stage people who are adequate to the Broadway side of things but hopelessly ill-at-ease and out-of-tune with Sholem Aleichem. (They dance a *freilachs* as if they were stomping out a number for *Carousel*.) Broadway wins—the show could run forever; Sholem Aleichem loses—not the first time in English; and Mostel, whose soul is split between the two, shows himself to be a superb performer but a shaky actor.

Whenever the others leave him alone, Mostel is marvelous. He twirls a finger in the air: and the spirit speaks. He shakes his hips: the earth trembles. He does a bit of gargling cantillation: it seems an equivalent in sound to our deepest fantasies gratified. He soars in the air, jigs, groans, pats his belly, rumbles his throat, pumps his eyes —and motion becomes wit. Yet all this is not enough, for it remains his performance, Zero Mostel enlarging upon his inspired *persona*. Were he rid of Sholem Aleichem and merely Zero on the stage, well and good. Were he free to plunge into a characterization, the effort would be worth our closest attention. But here, in this Broadway prison, he is caught between two worlds, two scales of value, two Mostels. He can neither do his stuff without interference nor submit to the enormously difficult requirements of Sholem Aleichem. Caught between the sinuous dancing and the flat-chested tunes, between his inclination to flare off entirely on his own and a cast that scatters in a dozen stylistic directions (from TV "situations" to Yente Telebende), Mostel is driven to something which strikes one as unnatural: he works too hard.

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*Produced by Harold Prince and directed by Jerome Robbins at the Imperial Theatre, New York.

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Marianne Moore once spoke of Ireland as the greenest land she'd never seen; Anatevka in *Fiddler on the Roof* is the cutest *shtetl* we've never had. Irresistible bait for the nostalgia-smitten audience, this charming little *shtetl* is first shown in the style of Chagall—itself a softened and sweetened version, sharply different from Sholem Aleichem—and then prettified still more. It all bursts with quaintness and local color, and the condescension that usually goes along. The condescension is affectionate, though not innocent, for while the creators of this play clearly want to do right by their subject, they must pause now and again, as Walter Kerr has remarked, "to give their regards to Broadway, with remembrances to Herald Square." For they too work in a tradition, and it is a fatal one: the pressure to twist everything into the gross, the sentimental, the mammoth, and the blatant. And since everyone connected with this play is very sophisticated, they make allowance in advance for all the obvious points of danger: there are quarrels among the Jews, not everything in Anatevka is idyllic, and there even occurs a *papiêr-maché* pogrom. Yet none of these "touches of realism" matters very much, for the spirit of Broadway proves invincible:

• A scene unfolds in which Tevye's family prepares to bless the Sabbath candles. We get set for some heart-tugging, but all right: it is part of the tradition and can be affecting. Then, to one's astonishment, the candle-blessing is surrounded by four more candle-blessings at each corner of the stage, flickeringly lighted against a background of darkness—and you have a *Shabbos* at Radio City Music Hall.

• Tevye is confused because his daughters are marying for love. Well and good: it's in Sholem Aleichem too. But then Mostel and the actress who transforms Tevye's wife into a grating Brownsville shrew go off into a feeble wise-cracking song, "Do You Love Me?" At this point I thought Mostel was embarrassed: he should have been.

• There is a wedding dance, done with zest and energy—perhaps a bit too much energy, but let's not be cranky, it's all right. Despite traditional taboos, men begin to dance with women, and all right again. But then, on the Broadway theory that multiplication is the secret of success, the rabbi, played strictly as a lampoon, also begins hopping around with a girl. Which shows that if there was a Jewish hand in this production, there was also a *goyisher kop*.

• Tevye talks to God: he does it in Sholem Aleichem, and critics rightly make much of this as a sign of the peculiarly intimate relationship between the *shtetl* Jews below and their Almighty above. Mostel also talks to God, the first time affectingly, but by the seventh or eighth time cloyingly. In Sholem Aleichem's stories, God is a presence to whom Jews can turn in moments of need and urgency; in *Fiddler on the Roof* He ends up as Zero Mostel's straight man.

AND THERE, I think, is the saddest thing about the play. Incredibly gifted as he is, Mostel cannot finally insulate himself from the sentimentalism and exploitativeness of his colleagues. He uses some of Sholem Aleichem's marvelous lines, but he bears down on them with a crushing weight, to make sure no one in the audience will miss the point; and because he lacks time and setting for true development, he hurriedly transforms these lines into mere gags ripped out of their context.

But come now, isn't all this a bit too serious? After all, it's only a musical, and in a musical you can't expect depth of characterization. Besides, you must allow for certain liberties in "adaptations" . . .

First: "adaptations." In the name of "adaptations," butchers rip the heart out of works of art. In the name of "adaptations," hacks commit manslaughter on the genius of the past. In the name of "adaptations," Broadway justifies its cynicism, its soulless mechanical skill. A black plague, a flaming curse on "adaptations."

Second: Sholem Aleichem. Of all the Yiddish writers he is the most difficult to translate. More than any other, he depends on intimate verbal plays and turns, and he writes on the assumption that his readers share a profoundly "inside" sense of his culture. The action in his stories tends to be slight, for everything rests on language, a kind of rippling monologue in which the full range of nuances is available only to the cultivated Yiddish reader. Inherently, then, Sholem Aleichem's stories are not very promising for dramatic performance (the type of reading I suggested earlier is quite another matter). The idea of a musical, which must necessarily discard the richness of texture that is Sholem Aleichem's greatest achievement, seems still more dubious. But let that pass—since, in any case, it will be dismissed as "purism" by all but the few people who know Sholem Aleichem.

What does need to be stressed, however, is that if a play involves the characters, setting, and aura of Sholem Aleichem, we not only have the right, but simply cannot avoid the need, to compare what is done in his name with what he himself did. A historical reference, whether to a real event or to a classic literary work, serves in a play or novel to establish a certain claim of dependence upon the past. In principle there is nothing wrong with this, but once done, it makes inevitable the risk of comparison. If you call a play *Moby Dick*, you can't very well present a tug-boat captain on the Hudson River fishing for stripers; and if you "base" your script on Sholem Aleichem . . .

Of course, the kind of criticism I have written serves little purpose. Those who can be persuaded must already know, while those who cannot will be crowding the box-office for months to come. And in the long run it is the response of the American Jewish public which is far more troubling, and important, than any Broadway production.

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American Jews suffer these days from a feeling of guilt because they have lost touch with the past from which they derive, and often they compound this guilt by indulging themselves in an unearned nostalgia. The less, for example, they know about East European Jewish life or even the immigrant Jewish experience in America, the more inclined they seem to celebrate it. As their own sense of Jewishness increasingly becomes fragile, more and more they feel—I would say, absurdly—grateful for any public recognition of Jewishness. A politician drops a Yiddish phrase, and they roar with delight. A TV comic slips in a Yiddish vulgarism, and they regard this as a communal triumph. A Jewish businessman makes ten million dollars, and the Yiddish press features this "son of our people." A play like *Fiddler on the Roof* exhibits the materials of Jewish family life, and the audience goes wild. What seems to matter in such responses is not the quality or appropriateness of the event that elicits them, but the sheer fact—heartbreaking when you reflect upon it—that some sign of the neglected Jewish past is being publicly displayed.

One understands the anxiety prompting such nostalgia, the nostalgia prompting a lack of critical standards, and the lack of critcial standards prompting a surrender of dignity. But it is unworthy. The most caustic criticism of *Fiddler on the Roof*—and none of it nearly caustic enough—has appeared in English, while the reviews I have seen in the Yiddish papers could do little more than pick on such details as the dancing between a rabbi and a girl. Trapped in its oppressive sense of isolation, the Yiddish press seems unable to recognize that the play raises far more important issues concerning the dignity of the Jewish tradition and the values of the contemporary Jewish world.

Now it may well be that "Jewishness" as we have understood it is reaching an end and that much is consequently being lost to us. Yet if that is true, or even if we are afraid that it may soon be true, must we engage in this beggar-like gratitude for the kind of popularizations which ought to make us turn our heads in dismay? If there is nothing else to be done, would not even a prideful silence be more appropriate?

In any case, it is now clear that those of us who were complaining ten or fifteen years ago about the neglect of Yiddish culture in America were quite wrong. If a future historian of the Yiddish epoch in American Jewish life will want to know how it came to an end, we now can tell him. Yiddish culture did not decline from neglect, nor from hostility, nor from ignorance. It it should die, it will have been from love—from love and tampering.

IRVING HOWE, *a frequent contributor, is the author of* A World More Attractive, *and co-editor (with Eliezer Greenberg) of* A Treasury of Yiddish Stories.

TELEVISION & CANADIAN CULTURE

Neil Compton

MONTREAL is the best place in the world in which to watch television. With the aid of a community cable or rooftop antennae, Montrealers can tune in the programs not only of three Canadian networks (two English and one French), but also of three American ones from stations in northern New England. The two English Canadian networks frequently feature programs from the BBC or ITV in Britain; less frequently, the French network uses material produced in France.

The viewer's choice extends from the usual quizzes, panel games, and situation comedies to bold experiments in documentary and drama. There are productions of Molière, Sheridan, and Shakespeare—and of Albee, Pinter, and Beckett. (Nothing lights up network switchboards with indignant calls like a good sordid modern play.) On the late show recently there have been opportunities to see such films as *Rashomon*, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, and *L'Avventura*, all uninterrupted and unabridged.

However, the cacophonous and kaleidoscopic airwaves of Montreal are more than a viewer's paradise: they are also an epitome of the conflicts and confusions of the country as a whole. On the one hand, Canada largely owes its existence as a sovereign state to the triumph of communications policy over geography, economics, and cultural diversity. Yet the very electronic media which make Canada possible are presently adding to the strains and tensions which endanger the confederation.

Canada, of course, is a geographical absurdity—a country of nearly four million square miles, where 80 per cent of the population lives within a strip three thousand miles long and one hundred fifty miles wide along the American border. The strip is not even continuous; the regions of Canada are cut off from one another by formidable natural barriers such as the Great Lakes, the Laurentian Shield, and the Rocky Mountains. By contrast, much of the boundary with the United States is purely arbitrary and theoretical. Like the rivers that rise in Canada and flow down across the border, Canadians themselves move north and south more easily and frequently than they move east and west. Far more Canadians have visited the United States than have visited any province other than the one in which they live. Surveys have shown that Canadians in the various regions often share more attitudes with their immediate neighbors to the south than they do with their fellow countrymen in other regions.

National unity under such circumstances can be achieved only at a price. The railways, telegraphs, highways, airways, and waterways that keep traffic and information moving from east to west have been expensive to build and maintain;

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often they duplicate services that might have been more cheaply and conveniently available in the United States. Wages in Canada tend to be lower and the cost of consumer goods higher than they are in the United States. But Canadians have been willing to pay this price for the maintenance of political identity, and an expanding economy has helped to make the burden tolerable.

The combination of immense capital costs and comparatively low returns has meant that government rather than private initiative dominates the communications field: through the characteristically Canadian institution of the crown corporation, the federal government owns a railway system, a major airline, a telecommunications corporation, a large film production agency, and a broadcasting system. One of the best things about Canadian public life is the imagination and efficiency with which these public enterprises have been run.

At this moment, cultural diversity is probably a greater problem to Canada than either geography or economics. If we apply to the Canadian population Karl Deutsch's definition of a "people," which stresses "complementary habits and facilities of communication" (including shared language, memories, customs, preferences, libraries, statues, signposts, and the like) we find English and French Canadians lacking in many of the necessary common characteristics. The difference is more than a matter of mere language: as Deutsch says, the Swiss, with their four languages, are one people. The Canadians, with two, are not. Not quite, and not yet.

The French Canadians (they number about a third of the population) are descended from sixty thousand original inhabitants whose roots in France were cut off by the Conquest of 1759. Their involvement with English-speaking Canadians has been less a matter of choice than of necessity. Though French communities may be found scattered from the Atlantic to the Pacific, the St. Lawrence valley is in the fullest sense the heartland of French Canada. The feeling of inwardness, of a shared (and tragic) history, of loyalty to a common faith and a geographical *patrie* or homeland is very strong among French Canadians. It has enabled them to maintain their unique identity in the face of the most formidable social and economic challenges.

IN CONTRAST to the fierce historicism of French-Canadian society, the English-speaking majority seems to lack any roots in the past. Though there is an epic quality to the early history of English Canada (matching the heroic tragedy of the French), somehow the links which connect this period with the present seem to have been severed, and few English Canadians feel much emotional identification with the explorers, fur traders, and administrators whose courage and imagination helped to open up the northern half of this continent. Canadian history has an unaccountable reputation for dullness among high-school students. This may be in part because so many of the early heroes were, and thought themselves, Englishmen or Scotsmen rather than Canadians. In fact, Canadian history, unlike American, has been largely made by outsiders: Canadians have no self-defining Declaration of Independence or Revolutionary War; they have not fought a civil conflict in defense of their national identity. The very constitution which gave them independence was an act, not of any Canadian body, but of the British Parliament.

The ancestors of most English-speaking Canadians emigrated to Canada fairly recently. They came at different times, from different places, and for different reasons. Their descendants' loyalty is not directed to one religion, one locality, or one set of values. For them, Canada is no warm, tight *patrie* to be loved or hated, but almost the reverse—an emptiness so vast that the image of the humans who live in it becomes dwarfed and blurred. Their myths tend to be geographical rather than social; the national motto is not *e pluribus unum* or even *e duobus unum*, but *a mari usque ad mare* ("from sea to sea"—an image which is incorporated in the two vertical blue bars of the proposed new Canadian flag); visionary politicians wax eloquent not over "the Canadian way of life" but over the untapped natural resources of the northern hinterland; until recently the bleakly and inhumanly beautiful landscape of the Laurentian Shield dominated both poetry and painting in English Canada. Hugh Kenner, the waspish expatriate who wrote scornfully of a "pathological craving for identification with the subhuman," was being only slightly unfair.

The combination of French-Canadian introspection and English-Canadian ambiguity might seem enough to daunt even the most wildly optimistic planners of a bilingual northern utopia, but the past few generations have added a further obstacle to the realization of the Canadian dream: the border offers no defense against the overflow of American popular culture. Far more Canadians regularly read American magazines than Canadian ones; of ninety-six periodicals that sell over a hundred thousand copies a month in Canada, ninety-two are American. Nearly 40 per cent of the Canadian population lives close enough to a U.S. television station to enjoy good reception, and even on Canadian stations, American programs dominate the air during prime viewing hours. On commercial radio the hit parade is as endemic as it is in the United States.

Canadian newspapers are local enough in character, but a high proportion of their foreign news comes from such American agencies as the Associated Press and United Press International. Ann Landers, Peanuts, and Walter Lippmann are as ubiquitous in Canada as across the border. In fact,

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apart from the wire service of the Canadian Press, virtually all nationally syndicated newspaper features originate in the United States.

No wonder Canadian nationalism (as distinct from local patriotism) tends to be "cool." The French feel little enthusiasm for a federal entity dominated by *les anglais* and the English, through long exposure to American media, are likely to know as much, or more, about American history and politics as they do about their own. This marginality is a fundamental fact about Canadian society. Nearly one in three Canadians feels so little identification with the present political establishment that he says he is ready to scrap it: a recent survey conducted by *MacLean's* magazine revealed that 29 per cent of the population, French and English, say they favor political union with the United States; 65 per cent were ready to contemplate economic union.

THOSE WHO, for whatever reason, wish to resist the tendencies I have been describing must solve the problem of assisting Canadian media to flourish in competition with their wealthy and entrenched American rivals. How to do this without alienating votes or interfering with the free flow of ideas has baffled every Canadian government since the 1920's. No solution has ever been found which commands universal support in press and parliament: debates on broadcasting or publishing policy are invariably hot and ill-tempered.

For this reason, the publicly owned Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has been for almost thirty years the most embattled of all federal agencies. The CBC was founded in 1936 to provide a national and predominantly Canadian broadcasting service to as high a percentage of the population as was technically possible—an aim beyond the resources and outside the purpose of a private commercial system. Today the Corporation owns and operates six separate radio or television network services in two different languages. Ninety-eight per cent of the population, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from the forty-ninth parallel to above the Arctic Circle, lives within range of its radio service. The English television network uses the longest microwave relay system in the world to link St. John's, Newfoundland, to Victoria, British Columbia, four thousand miles and six time zones away. The CBC's Montreal studios are said to be the world's largest center for the production of French-language TV programs, while Toronto is beginning to rival New York as the second city of North American English television. The CBC's annual budget amounted last year to over 115 million dollars, of which about 32 million came from advertising and the remainder from public funds.

These operations are carried out on behalf of a total audience not much larger than that of the New York viewing area, scattered over a territory one fifth larger than the continental USA, and in the face of strong competition for audiences and sponsors from private commercial stations whose total annual income far exceeds that of the CBC.

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation conceives its mandate from Parliament to involve four objectives:

1. To be a complete service, covering . . . the whole range of programming.
2. To link all parts of the country . . . through the inclusion of . . . national and common interests in its program services; [and to bring] the national program service to as many Canadians as finances allow.
3. To be predominantly Canadian in content and character . . . contributing to the development and preservation of national unity.
4. To serve equitably the two main language groups and cultures, and the special needs of Canada's various geographical regions.

Three of the four aims are explicitly concerned with creating a sense of Canadian identity, and the fourth (the provision of a complete service) is really a means to achieve the others. Evidently the CBC considers itself an instrument for the forging and maintenance of a distinctive bilingual Canadian nationalism. So far as I know, no other broadcasting system in the Western world conceives of its function in quite these terms. The American networks certainly do not have any comparable ambition, and the various European agencies are the expressions of long-established national cultures. The closest parallel of which I am aware is the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, but the ABC has neither to cope with two languages nor to compete with the combined blandishments of three wealthy American networks. (It is also supported entirely by public funds.)

Can a medium of mass communication in a free society really accomplish such a purpose? There have been many attacks on the CBC for its allegedly impractical, utopian, and paternalistic policy. Critics usually claim to speak on behalf of the great majority of Canadians (though cynics might suspect them of representing more limited interests). However, the evidence is overwhelming that Canadians in general approve of the Corporation's objectives. In 1963, the CBC commissioned an elaborate survey of "what the Canadian public thinks of the CBC." It showed that well over 90 per cent of the population approves even the most high-minded statements of CBC purpose, and that slightly smaller majorities think the Corporation fulfills these aims well or very well (the one exception being "helping French and English Canadians to understand and learn about each other"; only 57 per cent thought the CBC did well here).

However, even the most starry-eyed CBC executive knows that program policy cannot be based on the expectations aroused by such a survey. The commercial rating systems may be very crude

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indicators of the real involvement between viewers and their TV sets, but they are accurate enough to indicate a depressing contrast between what viewers say and what they do. Most of us, whatever may be our theories about the immense potentialities of broadcasting, turn to television (as others turn to detective stories or science fiction) primarily for relaxation and amusement. Any realistic daily program schedule must contain a very high proportion of light entertainment, and this necessity involves the CBC in some extraordinary compromises with its own principles.

The bitter fact is that most Canadians have formed their taste in entertainment from the most popular American network shows. The only Canadian productions which attract an equal or greater audience are televised games of the National Hockey or Canadian Football Leagues. In order to hold on to its audience and prevent them from switching to rival channels, the CBC must devote most of its time during prime viewing hours to American programs. This great instrument of Canadian culture cannot plan its winter schedule until after the United States networks have announced theirs. Thanks to the CBC, the Canadian Sunday evening is dominated not by Wayne and Shuster, *Festival*, and *Juliette*, but by *Disneyland*, Ed Sullivan, *Hazel*, and *Bonanza*.

One does not have to subscribe to any exaggerated theory about the influence of the media to see that such a state of affairs can lead only to the slow Americanization of the Canadian audience. Opinions may differ as to the desirability of that development, but official Canada must view the tendency with concern and horror. The Board of Broadcast Governors, which regulates all broadcasting in Canada, has decreed that television stations must maintain an average 55 per cent Canadian content in their program schedules. This ruling seems ill-conceived: it makes no distinction between, say, the *Beverly Hillbillies* and a program like *Camera Three*; it raises the prospect of bad cheap Canadian programs driving viewers to American channels; and the definition of Canadian content is so hedged with qualifications that the World Series and President Johnson's acceptance speech are considered Canadian, on the grounds of strong viewer interest. Even at best, as Alan Thomas, a shrewd and witty critic has suggested, the ruling can lead to no more than a 55 per cent Canadian audience.

THE ONLY adequate answer to the challenge of American influence would be the development of a genuine indigenous Canadian popular art. There is, for instance, no successful Canadian equivalent to such classic American TV genres as the Western or the family situation comedy. Whatever may be their artistic limitations, such dramatic stereotypes enshrine profound (if sometimes inaccurate) popular intuitions about American life. For better or for worse, Canada seems to be a land without comparable myths of its own.

The CBC has done its best to supply the lack, but with indifferent success. An attempt to wean Canadian children away from such second-hand heroes as cowboys and Davy Crockett with a million-dollar series on the life of the explorer and adventurer Pierre Radisson was one of the most disastrous projects ever undertaken by the Corporation. Even the Mounties have been more successfully exploited in the American media than they have been at home. A CBC dramatic series about a Royal Canadian Mounted Police detachment was less painfully inadequate than *Radisson*, but failed to generate the mythic intensity of a second-rate Western. It seems that even television has not succeeded in triumphing over the wilderness, the distance, and the climate to make a native Canadian popular art possible. Not in English, at any rate.

On the French TV network, though, things are so very different that when Montrealers switch from Channel 6 to Channel 2, they seem to be transported to a different city. *Radio Canada* has all the energy, imaginative vitality, and rapport with its audience that English-speaking producers long for. The French-Canadian community might have been specially designed to support a popular television service: it is homogeneous, large enough to provide a variety of audiences but not so large as to be formless, and it is protected from undue outside influence by the language barrier. Since the French TV network began operation, French Canada has ceased to be frightened by the bogy of assimilation—which kept her for generations in a state of defensive isolation from the world—and has begun to take an ebullient and aggressive delight in her own unique identity. It is impossible to doubt that television has played a vital part in stimulating this renaissance.

Thus the CBC's attempt to serve Canada's two cultures equitably succeeds, insofar as it does, at the expense of national unity. The more effectively it serves either community, the more it will reinforce those characteristics which set them apart from one another. Naturally, the Corporation is aware of this problem and has tried to solve it. There have been a number of rather self-conscious and embarrassed bilingual variety shows which served to dramatize rather than bridge the gulf. Dozens of programs on all four networks have undertaken the task of explaining the French and the English to one another. It is doubtful whether these have been very successful in influencing the mass of the population. There are, after all, many pitfalls in the way of mass communication. Even apart from the general tendency of the media to focus on and dramatize the conflict and violence in any situation, one is reminded of the experiment recently carried out by the BBC: a radio program of advice on travel-

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ing in France ended by discouraging more potential tourists than it encouraged because more listeners were frightened by the prospect of problems they had not expected (language, currency, etc.) than were reassured by the helpful hints. The Canadian confederation has rested for years on certain convenient mutual misunderstandings between English and French Canadians. Now that the new media are ensuring that they understand one another only too well, discord rather than harmony is the initial consequence.

FOR ALL this, however, the CBC is one of the great forces for reason and civilization in Canada. Once we grant the fact that a native popular culture does not and probably cannot exist in English Canada, we are free to recognize that CBC program policy has been about as liberal and imaginative as one could reasonably expect of a great public communications system.

The new media have often been accused of battening parasitically upon the creative energy of real art, vulgarizing its themes, and seducing its practitioners with fame and money. This may be so in societies with a deeply rooted traditional culture, but it has not been so in Canada. With its small, dispersed population and puritan, philistine outlook, English Canada in particular had virtually no serious professional tradition of music or theater at the time that the CBC was established. Now, half a dozen cities have cadres of actors, musicians, and dancers who are able to earn a tolerable living by combining live performance with appearances on radio or TV. The Corporation's budget for serious programming in the field of the arts may be small in relation to the whole, but it is enough to insure that composers, playwrights—even poets—can hope for at least occasional commissions which involve few or no concessions to popular taste, and sometimes not even to the medium.

It is usually on radio that such minority intellectual and artistic interests are now catered to. Almost deserted by commercial sponsors and banished from the living room by the family TV, CBC network radio has become a kind of middlebrow Canadian magazine, at its best the electronic equivalent of the *Atlantic Monthly* or the *Saturday Review*. As one might deduce from its middle-class ambience, it is probably the most eloquent and influential instrument of enlightened nationalism in Canada.

Canada's marginal culture—occupying a middle ground between British and American, English and French, civilization and wilderness—appears to favor the interpretative and critical, rather than the fiercely creative, intelligence. Life in Canada inculcates a respect for the brutal, objective thusness of nature and an awareness (sometimes a wry one) of the validity of opposition to it. Canadians tend to become singers, pianists, actors, critics, and diplomats rather than composers, dramatists, poets, or political geniuses.

This is the ideal temperament for documentary, and the greatest triumphs of Canadian broadcasting, as of Canadian cinema, have been in this field. The CBC's audience has become accustomed to workmanlike documentary programs as part of the regular weekly diet on both radio and television. Occasionally, these soberly factual productions come close to the heights of poetry and truth: among the most interesting recent television successes have been *One More River*, a painfully vivid study of the Negro civil rights movement, and *Mr. Pearson*, an example of extreme *cinéma vérité* in which long-distance microphones and hand-held cameras gave so frank and intimate a picture of a day in the life of the Prime Minister that it has never been shown to the general public.

Recently, the documentary spirit has been tending toward irony, another mode encouraged by Canada's comparatively helpless proximity to stronger or wealthier neighbors. The basic technique is simple—to juxtapose pictures and commentary (often by the subject himself) in order to achieve almost Swiftian satiric intensities. Recent little masterpieces have included *Lonely Boy*, about the Canadian pop singer Paul Anka; *The Image Makers*, about the public relations industry; and *Lorne Greene's Bonanza*, about the one-time CBC announcer and Stratford festival actor who has struck it rich as Ben Cartwright. But the *chef d'oeuvre* of this genre so far is undoubtedly *One Time Around*, in which Hugh Hefner expounds the Playboy's philosophy against a shifting background of playmates, bunnies, and penthouse parties.

Irony and parody are also the mode of the TV comedians Wayne and Shuster. Their relentless spoofing of every sacred or profane cow—from biculturalism and the Stratford Festival to cool jazz and teen-age fashions—is more obvious and less sophisticated than the documentary tradition I have described, but it probably comes closer to the expression of a native popular art than anything else on the CBC English network. The conclusion seems to be that though Canadians may lack a strong sense of their own identity, they do not allow this to inhibit them in deflating fraud or pomposity, whether it be native or foreign. In developing this genre, the CBC may, like Holden Caulfield, have found its own unique way of confronting the modern world.

NEIL COMPTON *is chairman of the English department at Sir George Williams University in Montreal. The present piece was adapted from a lecture given at an American Sociological Association meeting last fall. This is Mr. Compton's first appearance in* COMMENTARY.

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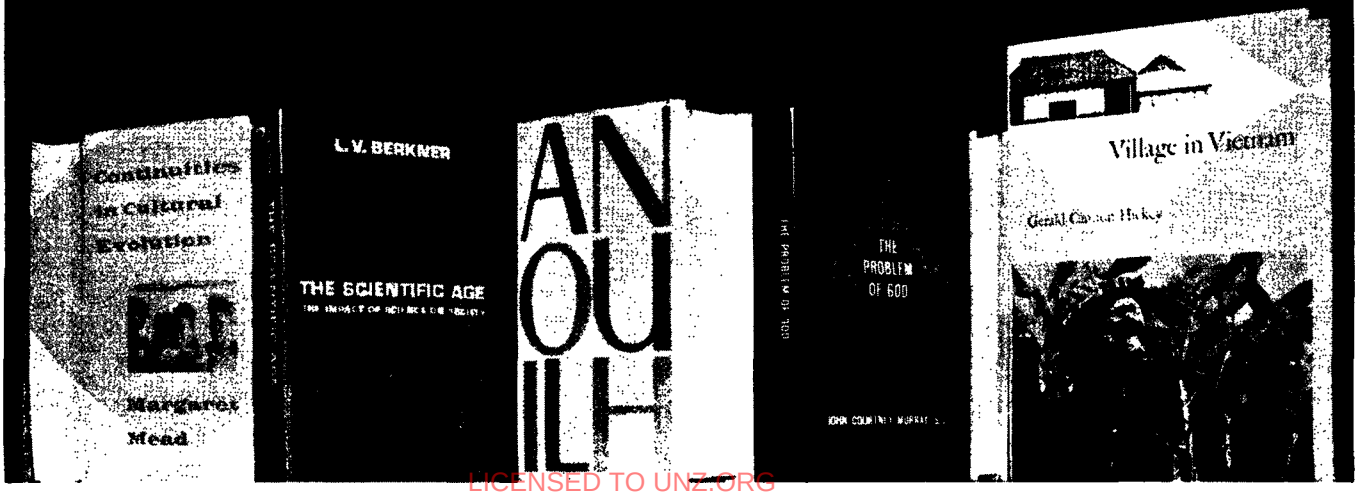

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MOCKING HEROICS

TO AN EARLY GRAVE. By WALLACE MARKFIELD. *Simon & Schuster. 256 pp. $4.50.*

Reviewed by MARION MAGID

LIKE A NUMBER of recent examples of the urban-picaresque mode, *To an Early Grave* seems less a novel than a theatrical performance. The reader, alone with the book, feels himself solicited into the role of spectator, feels almost called upon to applaud following some especially striking piece of theatrical virtuosity.

As a performer in this vein—which is related to that of the standup comedians—Wallace Markfield is extremely well-qualified. He has a gift for mimicry bordering on voodoo and an uncanny ear—not only for the obvious accents and the coarser effects, but for the most subtle nuances of the species of urban paranoia that can be overheard being expressed at any Rikers counter; he seems to know, by some process of mimetic extension, precisely the state of fragmentation that such people's minds can reach. Apart from this, he possesses something like total recall for those artifacts of the 30's and 40's—the radio programs, the movies, the confections, the games, the sidewalk chants—which are fast becoming a kind of instant comic iconography. If merely to invoke the mention of a melorol these days is sufficient unto itself as a comic strategem, Mr. Markfield appears to have available the entire inventory of long-defunct candy stores, as well as a vast range of related references, and to be able to marshal them at will in an almost endless variety of combinations. A good deal of the comic effect of *To an Early Grave* depends on mining this particular area, which is still novel enough—in print, at least—to provide a genuine shock of recognition. It would be interesting, in fact, to speculate on why it is funny to see the word "jujube" or "malomar" in print and not funny to see, say, "catfish" or "molasses cookie." There seems to be something thrilling and faintly scandalous about exposing to public view the data of that Bronx or Brooklyn childhood that some of us share in the manner of a guilty secret.

Unfortunately, however, in deploying this comic device—as with so much else in the book—Mr. Markfield labors under a constitutional predilection to overdo matters. Partly, no doubt, the exigencies of the genre itself are responsible—the pressure to leave 'em laughing, the strain of the spotlight, the persistent goading on of the performer by the audience to outdo himself—and not necessarily in the area of his more subtle talents ("Give us the pretzel lady again! . . ."). Whether in response to these or other urgencies, Mr Markfield is consistently willing to enlist his most brilliant gifts in the most questionable service—sacrificing really good jokes to foolish ones by placing them all on an equal footing. As a result, the novel constantly careens between two poles, which could be designated, respectively, the best and the worst of Wallace Markfield. At his best (in passages like the letter from Leslie Braverman to his wife, Morroe Rieff's reverie by a graveside, the eulogy of the rabbi), he gets precision into every detail, and he uses mimicry in the service not of showing-off but of delineating character. At his worst, he descends to the level of a scabrous dialect comedian, evoking in the reader an unsettling sense of *déja vu*. Where, the reader wonders, has he come across that particular kind of mock-heroics before, that special brand of conjugal incantation ("Squeeze me juice." "A person without compassion is not a juice-squeezer. . . ."), that way of using Yiddish that

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IT IS, one imagines, the Kober tonalities that made an immediate *succès de scandale* of *To an Early Grave*. The idea of the avant-garde New York (Jewish) literary world as made up of characters out of *Thunder Over the Bronx* (" . . . because I raised you from a middlebrow") is hard to resist; and it is hard not to laugh as the guardians of the sacred flame of English prose *shlepp*, *shlump*, and *kvetch* their way through the pages of this novel, inverting their sentence structure, making a hash of their syntax, frequently departing the precincts of language altogether in favor of a more primal utterance (*whoosh, gaah, choopie bar choopie*). Yet if it is hard to stop laughing at first, it gets easier after a while. As anyone knows who has ever emerged white and shaken from a Terry Toon, an impulse darker than simple high spirits has revealed itself to be at work when the cat has been slammed against the stovepipe for the fifth time around. So, too, as this novel gets madder and madder, as the jokes go on for longer and longer, as the parody gets more and more out of hand, agreeing to sacrifice even that minimum of verisimilitude necessary for its own satiric purposes, one begins to sense a fearful urgency beneath the antic energy, something akin to the zeal of the avenger.

To an Early Grave is a farce about a funeral—or, more precisely, about a journey to and from a funeral. Making the trip are four of the friends and disciples of Leslie Braverman, teacher and critic, who has died suddenly of a heart attack at the age of forty. They include Barnet Weiner, who writes for the quarterlies, is in analysis, and has a girlfriend named Myra Mandelbaum with oily hair; Holly Levine, who also writes for the quarterlies, and is apparently fixated both upon his mother and upon the Volkswagen which conveys the mourners toward their destination; and Felix Ottensteen, Zionist, Yiddishist, staff member of *Yetzt*, who is referred to throughout as *der Alte*—creating unseemly echoes of Bonn every time he makes a move. (Is it entirely accidental that those who use Yiddish for comic purposes—be they salesmen, nightclub entertainers, or novelists—are invariably a trifle off?) The fourth member of the party is Morroe Rieff, who works as a fund-raiser for Jewish causes and is the only one in the group not engaged in the life of letters. A defector from literary bohemia, he lives in an apartment on the West Side, whose "marble-topped coffee table," a mark of shame before his literary colleagues, is to become later, in the resolution of the novel, his badge of glory.

Via a series of deadly comic snapshots of their secret Sunday morning lives, these characters are not so much revealed to the reader as "discovered" to him in the Elizabethan sense (behind the arras, and usually up to no good). Not that it really matters what they happen to be doing: the quality of Mr. Markfield's gaze is such that anything it encompasses takes on the color of a scandal. Felix Ottensteen, drawing on his orthopedic shoes, Hollis Levine composing an essay, Leslie Braverman dying young—all seem to have been caught *in flagrante delicto*, no less than Barnet Weiner, who is in fact so caught with Myra Mandelbaum.

CARRYING this less than beautiful complement of mourners, the Volkswagen sets out on that wild journey across Wallace Markfield's Brooklyn which comprises the exterior framework of the novel. During the trip Mr. Markfield's choicest effects are reserved for Weiner and Levine, a comedy team *à la* Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who while away the time by alternating questionable reminiscences of Leslie Braverman with a running contest for supremacy in pop culture expertise. But Mr. Markfield's indictment spreads in ever-widening circles. By the time the car has reached the funeral home, Leslie Braverman himself has been implicated, and the circumstances surrounding his burial serve as the occasion for extending Mr. Markfield's parodic zeal and anger to the entire liter-

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ary community assembled there. ("We must first determine whether we want a memoir or critique," says Levine, taking the arm of the editor of *Second Thoughts*, from whom he is trying to get an assignment to do a piece on Leslie. The body has not yet been lowered into its grave.)

Morroe Rieff is the only character who escapes the Markfield wrath. He has been distinct from the beginning, first as an outsider who is to some extent the victim of the Braverman-Levine-Weiner circle, and later as the protagonist—the only character Mr. Markfield allows to possess an inner logic, consciousness, and motives. During the journey he has kept silent, but beneath his silence he has been engaged in a kind of protest against what he has been forced to witness. Unlike the others, who are presumed heartless and content to be so, he at least is in search of the responses of the heart. And in the end, he alone is vouchsafed the release of a catharsis—weeping finally for Leslie, as (in line with the general spirit of things) he rubs insect repellent on his prostrate wife.

Yet the plea for feeling Mr. Markfield expresses through his protagonist sounds rather less than fully convincing. It is he, after all, who has written this book—worthy of Weiner and Levine at their most savage. Nor is it some alleged literary community that is done in by Mr. Markfield's wrath, as so many reviewers have assumed; it is the novel itself that finally pays the price. *To an Early Grave* contains some brilliant set-pieces and certain memorable moments, but on the whole it turns out to be misshapen, lopsided, and wildly inconsistent in quality. Save for Morroe, moreover, there are no characters; the others are barely distinguishable one from another, their features erased by the acid of Mr. Markfield's contempt. Thus, as in one of those novelty postcards that are sold at amusement parks, Morroe is condemned to make his way alone through the pages of the book, poking his head through a painted landscape with painted figures.

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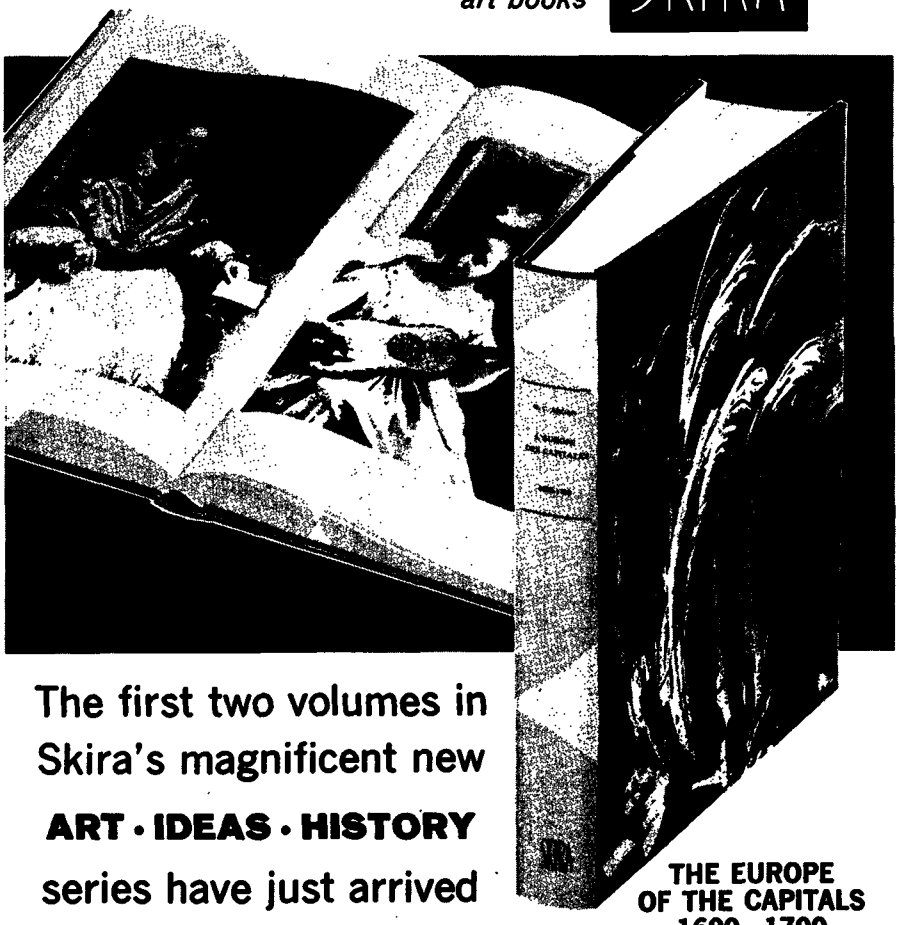

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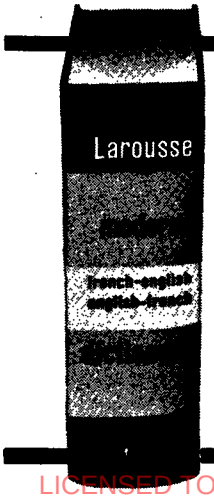

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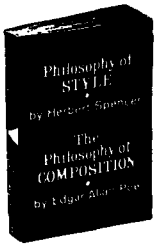

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THE ACT OF CREATION. By ARTHUR KOESTLER. *Macmillan. 728 pp. $8.95.*

Reviewed by KATHLEEN NOTT

ARTHUR KOESTLER'S IMMENSE and splendid work may itself be regarded as a creative act—in terms of his own comprehensive formula. For it is an attempt—in general a highly successful one—to make a novel and original unity out of two incompatible "matrices" or contexts: science and art. It would be more correct to say, however, that they have usually been assumed to be incompatible by those who have thought about the subject at best vaguely, while of late they have been further wrenched apart by those who have looked at it more closely, but wrongly. The discussion arose in education where both "Science" and the "Humanities," through their spokesmen, often self-appointed and thinking in terms of the achievements of their specialty rather than of its values, have been inclined to prescribe a course in one or the other as a way of fitting you into whatever collective future is anticipated.

Mr. Koestler is not the only thinker or writer who has realized in the past few years that neither science nor art can be wholly understood in terms of collective usefulness or social and psychological engineering, or indeed in terms of actual results and achievements —works, products, and books. But if others besides Mr. Koestler have seen that the scientist like the artist is a mind and a uniquely personal combination of attitudes, no one else, so far as I know, has shown signs of anything like Mr. Koestler's degree of insight into widely various fields of knowledge. This insight provides him with copious and imaginative illustration, not to mention a detailed and embittered acquaintance with his psychological enemy: the insidious philosophy of Behaviorism and computerism to which all of us could so easily surrender in our sleep.

What Mr. Koestler's book is about is creativity and uniqueness—the way that we are, in fact or potentially, free beings, not automata—or more justly, the way that some beings have been able to emerge, at least from time to time, from their conditioned habituality. But the book is not in itself a philosophy or counter-philosophy: it is not even exactly a psychology of aesthetics. Rather it is an attempt to discern a pattern of behavior that runs through the whole living universe and is most representatively human in art and science. So you might call it a new *myth*—in no derogatory sense, but as a premonition of what might become a science.

The theme which has engendered this literally *magnum* opus (of a remarkably aerated texture in spite of its size) occupied Mr. Koestler for years. He produced what was in effect a first volume, *Insight and Outlook*—mainly the aesthetic thesis—promising to follow it up in a year or so with another, containing the physiological and psychological backing: actually this has taken about fifteen years. During the interval, Mr. Koestler has absorbed and digested a vast and solid body of biological knowledge and understanding which he has injected under the skin of his original thesis.

THE COMMON pattern which Mr. Koestler discerns in original scientific discovery, in painting and in music, in poetry and fiction, in both comedy and tragedy, can be seen at its most primitive in the anatomical structure of a joke. Here are the two incompatible "matrices" or contexts, in uncomplicated visibility. I quote an example, not because it is by any means the best joke (a venerable chestnut, as Mr. Koestler says, worn out by analysis), but because of its compactness:

> A convict was playing cards with his jailers. On discovering that he cheated, they kicked him out of jail.

"It can be analyzed," says Mr. Koestler, "in a single sentence—two conventional rules ('offenders are

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He sped back and sketched the Wainwright Building, "a very sudden and volcanic design," Sullivan recalled, "made literally in three minutes." Frank Lloyd Wright, his chief draughtsman,remembered the thrill of looking over the drawing board, "I was perfectly aware of what had happened. The skyscraper as a new thing beneath the sun... with virtue, individuality, beauty all its own, was born."

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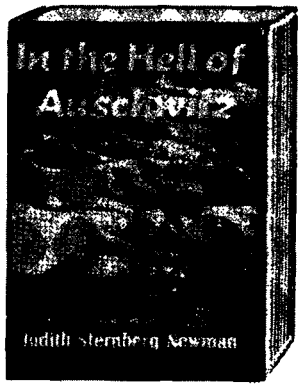

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punished by being locked up' and 'cheats are punished by being kicked out') each of them self-consistent, collide in a given situation." This is the bisociational pattern which Mr. Koestler now proceeds to track down and illustrate, not only in the mind and works of man, but throughout the living universe:

> When two independent matrices of perception or reasoning interact with each other the result . . . is either a *collision* ending in laughter, or their *fusion* in a new intellectual synthesis, or their *confrontation* in an aesthetic experience . . . the same pair of matrices can produce comic, tragic or intellectually challenging effects. [This conversion is performed by] a simple change of emotional climate—the fat man slipping . . . on the icy pavement will be either a comic or a tragic figure according to whether the spectator's attitude is dominated by malice or pity . . . in between these two is the emotionally balanced attitude of the physician . . . whose primary concern is to find out the nature of the injury.

In earlier pages, Mr. Koestler gives a generalized version of his bisociational concept, so as to provide a structural formula for the whole book and bring all its sections together:

> The word "matrix" means any habit or skill, any pattern of ordered behavior governed by a "code" of fixed rules. . . . The exercise of a skill is always under the dual control (a) of a fixed code of rules (which may be innate or acquired) and (b) of a flexible strategy, guided by environmental pointers—the "lie of the land."

The chief significance of this structural concept of matrix and code emerges when Mr. Koestler pursues his bisociational creative pattern into the non-human cosmos. Here the quality of matrix and code is developed into the concept of the hierarchical organization of all living organisms, individual and social—a concept which Mr. Koestler carries, with copious illustration, right down into the myriad varieties of motility among the minor organisms ("The lowliest creature and the highest, the moment it is hatched or born, lashes out at the environment"). The central nervous system, in other words, is not a repetitive machine—it allows local autonomy, free play on the periphery.

This holistic and purposive idea of living behavior is aimed again at the Behavioristic foe—nowhere, however, in this book, it must be emphasized, treated as an Aunt Sally, nor as an excuse for dead-horse-flogging. Mr. Koestler places himself, that is to say, on flexible terms with his opponents, in whom he is widely versed, and some of whom indeed, in the later developments of experimental psychology and learning theory, can be shown to be just about on his side. That rats running mazes can acquire a kind of "insight," a map in the head, is conceded by a number of experimentalists. (This is often much clearer when the Behaviorist language is translated: Mr. Koestler is good on the Michelin-tire disguises of technical jargon which, when deflated, may emit a breath of common sense. For instance, Hull on rat-motivation—"That stimulus associated with reinforcement could become at once *both* a drive and a reinforcing agent. . . ." —which Mr. Koestler boils down to "A rewarding experience can be at the same time an incentive and a reward.")

In attacking Behaviorism as—much more than a scientific method—an insidious evolutionary philosophy with enormous moral implications about our real potentialities, Mr. Koestler reaches to the lowest biological levels to trace the roots of choice and freedom, and claims that all organisms are in fact *over*-conditioned for flexibility and sensibility in reacting to environmental stimuli.

He comments that 20th-century psychology of all kinds has mostly taken the "detensional" view of motivation, according to which the reduction of painful stimuli either from inside or from outside is what powers the machine. But while he himself regards this picture as "depressingly correct up to a point"—meaning, I take it, that most of us most of the time are habitual automata and copiers—he claims that here he starts from the point where the doctrine is no longer true. He is writing, in short, about geniuses,

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the actual examples of the original's break with habit, either his own habits of thought, or the unobserved and unreflected assumptions which he has picked up from collective existence.

THIS IS ILLUSTRATED with great precision and insight from the scientists—notably Kepler and Darwin. The descriptions of the fumblings and the errors which went on in their mental top-storeys during the prolonged incubation period before the "Eureka!" moment, the dramatic and apparently spontaneous breakthrough into realization, make exciting reading; convincing too. And Mr. Koestler is excellent and very illuminating on the real history of ideas, for instance on the "linear" illusion that science, at least, makes a straight progression. He has a melancholy list of mistakes, cases of "snow-blindness," when the best qualified missed the most obvious conclusions—and of the collective resistance to innovation of scientific "establishments" of all sorts. Though, unlike other "churches," the scientific establishments have not usually garbled the founding Word, they have often conveniently mislaid it—or even buried it with dark rites.

To show us the scientist as a real human being reacting to a real and very haphazard world of buzzing experiences is the main intention of the book. But although Mr. Koestler is so much better—as well as more heartening—on the subject of a pleasurable motivation than the psychological schools he attacks, his own view has limitations. He allows, and rightly, a large place for curiosity—from rats in mazes to scientists (including no doubt experimental psychologists). But the reward which is also the incentive for both scientists and artists is our old acquaintance, the Freudian "oceanic feeling" (a mystical sense of oneness with something-or-the-other). I just don't believe that this is a true description. In my view, there is a real and quite special disinterestedness in any true act of creation; it is also an act of vision which is extremely convincing and reassuring to the seer about the nature of reality, about what is *there*, and hence it is peculiarly satisfying.

While Mr. Koestler has produced an extremely vivid and comprehensive account of the *origins* of originality, then, he seems to be somewhat weaker on its evaluation, on what validates discoveries and performances and puts them in a scale of values and gives them their rightful place in the worlds of knowledge and appreciation. This is too big a book in every way, however, not to have discoverable weaknesses. And we should be endlessly grateful to a writer who can manage to be stimulating on nearly every one of 700-odd pages. Mr. Koestler's "myth" is a splendid pair of spectacles for looking at a vastly enriched psychological landscape.

THE MORAL SOCIETY

THE RADICAL TRADITION. By R. H. TAWNEY. *Pantheon. 214 pp. $4.95.*

Reviewed by GEORGE KATEB

R. H. TAWNEY, who died two years ago, was the last of the great English socialist intellectuals. An eminent economic historian, author of the famous *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism,* he was also a distinguished moralist. Throughout his long life he labored to persuade England of the rightness of socialism, and to prevent the socialists from forgetting their socialism while trying to acquire power. Unlike his fellow-workers—Shaw, the Webbs, H. G. Wells, Harold Laski—he experienced no startling shifts and reversals of thought or sympathy. It could even be said that Tawney never really changed his mind. From first to last, he was a gradualist reformer, a democratic socialist, an unembarrassed patriot. His intelligence was constantly disciplined by his moral interests; his moral interests were constantly impelling him to consider political possibilities and reckon political costs. To the vulgar, this moderation and steadfastness may appear to be boring, philosophically innocent, perhaps pseudo-radical. But when the late Hugh Gaitskell said in a memorial speech that Tawney's "two great socialist books—*The Acquisitive Society* and *Equality*—made a tremendous impact upon

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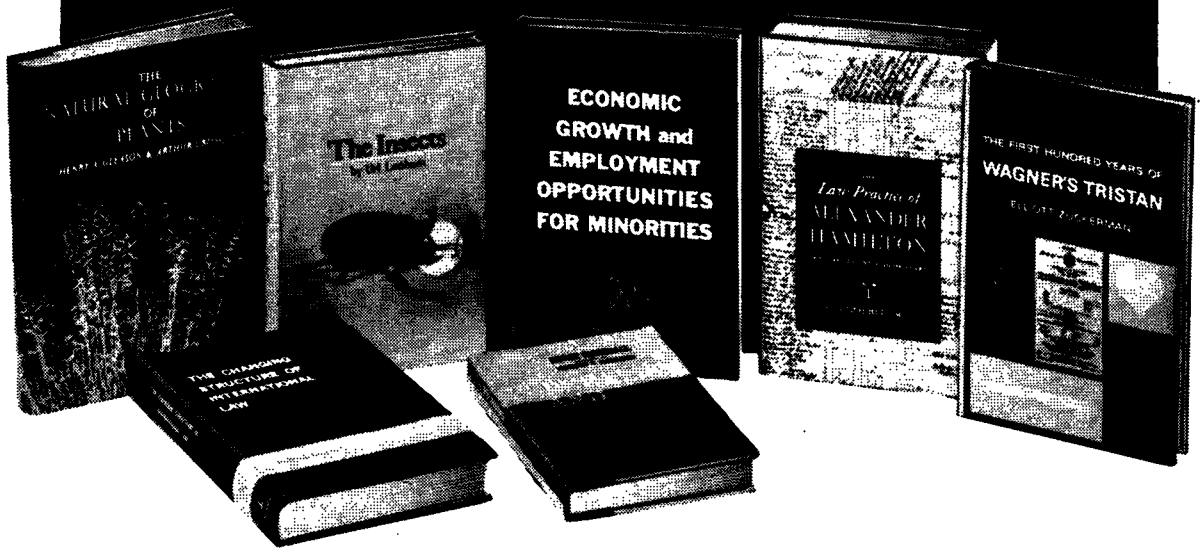

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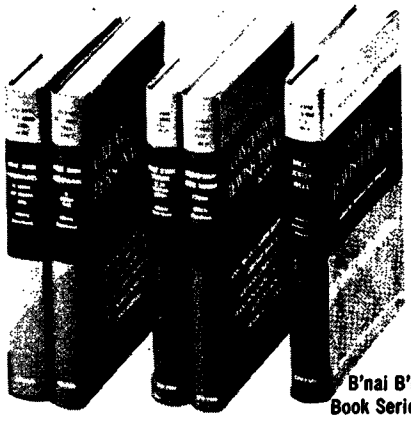

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my generation," he was not indulging in the extravagances of eulogy. Tawney's writings are deeply passionate, and arouse an answering passion in the reader. The present book, the second collection of Tawney's occasional writings, ranges in time from 1914 to 1953, and in subject from John Ruskin to adult education, from the nature of liberty to the sociological uses of literature. And in the midst of all this variety we hear a steady sound: the true voice of political humanitarianism.

Tawney resembles Orwell more than he does anyone else. Their styles are remarkably similar: hurried without being breathless, lucid, bare of involutions—though Tawney sometimes allows himself a string of long words or an artful formulation to show that, after all, he is a scholar. The real resemblance is in their view of morality. Some years ago, in his introduction to *Homage to Catalonia*, Lionel Trilling said that as a writer Orwell "seems to be serving not some dashing *daimon* but the plain, solid Gods of the Copybook Maxims," and referred to Orwell's "simple ability to look at things in a downright, undeceived way." These remarks apply with equal force to Tawney, with the proviso that the trace of self-conscious tough-guy moral simplicity in Orwell is wholly missing in Tawney.

For Tawney there is no doubt that the most ordinary canons of morality *require* an Englishman to be a socialist. Much of Tawney's writing was aimed at reminding clergymen and bourgeois alike that the short sentences that summed up their moral duties were to be taken literally; and that the gradual reformation of society had as its mission to draw reality ever closer to the standards that everyone accepted or said he accepted. The real problem was not to preach a new gospel or to construct a new political theory. It was to make customary beliefs more vivid, and to demonstrate with both patient knowledge and unforced passion that the time was ripe for those beliefs to be acted on in social life.

The marvel is that combined with this moral directness, this resolute rejection of worldliness as a

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corrective to the hopeless wish of taking the world's protestations at face value, is a great awareness of "the lion in the path" of reform. There was not a single important obstacle that escaped Tawney's attention, whether established interests, ingrained snobberies, the deficiencies of socialist leadership, or the drag of habit. True to his own morality, his analysis of English society is strong in condemnation, but absolutely without rancor. He was quite aware that in earlier times the ruling classes feared education, leisure, and prosperity as subversive of the docility of the masses; even now, he knew, prejudice and vague anxiety led to resistance to reformist proposals. But he was confident that with time things would improve. He shrewdly saw that two terrible wars, by the economic planning they necessitated, the common sacrifices they imposed, the loyalties they elicited, had provided the strongest force working toward a socialist society. Like Orwell, he believed that the English people were a family, but with the wrong members in charge.

OF ALL the moral banalities to which he proudly subscribed, and which he so beautifully burnished, the central one was: "The foundation of Socialism is, in my view, a decision that certain types of life and society are fit for human beings and others not." (These words come from an essay reprinted in *The Radical Tradition*.) He was always insisting on the idiotically simple distinction between means and ends. There was only one end: the fully human personality. Everything else—all the proposals for the nationalization of industry, the provision of welfare services, the redistribution of income, the growth of production—was instrumental. He worked hard for the means, but never forgot they were means. Wherever he saw instances of the flowering of human personality in the past, he praised without regard to his socialism. The present collection of essays ends with a stunning lyrical appreciation of Elizabethan England. There is no guilty conscience here, no moral heaviness—just a worship of beauty tinged but not sick-

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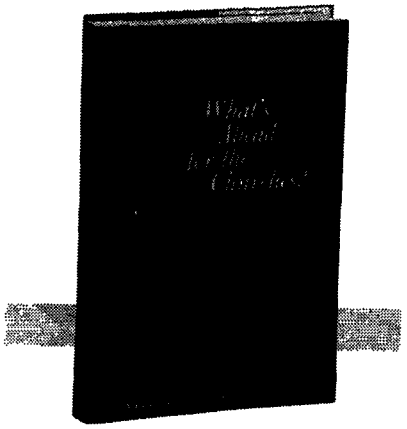

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ened by the barbarities of the age. Years before, in *The Acquisitive Society,* he wrote as a fervent socialist: "Whatever the future may contain, the past has shown no more excellent social order than that in which the mass of the people were the masters of the holdings which they plowed and of the tools with which they worked, and could boast, with the English freeholder, that 'it is a quietness to a man's mind to live upon his own and to know his heir certain.' " He wanted England to become an "Opportunity State," where talents would be liberated, and all men given a fair chance. But he also was concerned that all the untalented be assured their decencies: his defense of individuality is free of insolence.

He carried his humanism so far as to cherish political democracy more even than socialism. The values he saw embodied in representative government he took as ultimate; he wished to see them prevail in economic relations as well. He advocated in his writings early and late—and some are in this volume—that workers share in the management of their firms. He thought greater efficiency would result; but more important than that, the principle of self-determination would be served, and with it the fully human personality. As for political democracy itself, he wrote: "It is not certain, though it is probable, that Socialism can in England be achieved by the methods proper to democracy. It is certain that it cannot be achieved by any other; nor even if it could, should the supreme goods of civil and political liberty, in whose absence no Socialism worthy of the name can breathe, be part of the price." If at times Tawney appears to be a tepid socialist, it is because he was more than a socialist. He could not be ruthless about any socialist policy for the reason that fanaticism and democracy are incompatible. His view of power supported his defense of democracy. He thought any exercise of power morally harmful to the subject; he suspected the state; he hoped that under state socialism the people would not lose that disquiet concerning authority which is one of the underlying democratic sentiments. And behind these practical considerations in democracy's favor is the view that more than any other system, it both honors one's privacy and allows some involvement in the public processes shaping one's life. The deepest argument for democracy is again a moral one, a Copybook Maxim, an open assertion of the rights of personality.

At a time when humanist political thought is in disarray, reading Tawney may seem to add to the malaise. There may be a suspicion that his economic views are outmoded, have lost their thrust, and that if socialism still deserves to exist, it must be much more sophisticated than Tawney's version of it. There may be the worry that Tawney is too eager to be conciliatory, too afraid of losing good things for the sake of getting better; and that when his intellectual generosity is translated into action, profound but unsettling reforms will be avoided. There may be debilitating nostalgia for a period in which it was apparently possible to feel something like Tawney's moral certainty, in which reformers knew that one of their best allies was the guilt of the established interests. In short, one may be tempted to accord Tawney respect, praise him for his past services, and then put him aside. That would be, I think, a great mistake. Whatever his present relevance on technical or tactical matters, his writings as a whole achieve one permanent thing. They formulate the reasons for being radical, reasons which are moral and will inevitably be simple, and which it is pitifully easy even for radicals to despise or ignore. The Copybook must have the last word, and Tawney makes us see just that.

PHILOSOPHY AND JUDAISM

THE RECURRENT PATTERN: STUDIES IN ANTI-JUDAISM IN MODERN THOUGHT. By NATHAN ROTENSTREICH. *Horizon. 125 pp. $4.50.*

Reviewed by
WERNER J. DANNHAUSER

MODERN THOUGHT, according to Professor Rotenstreich, has not done justice to Judaism. If the function

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of thought is to transcend or overcome traditional opinion, then modern thought has clearly failed in regard to Judaism, for it has been content to accept the Christian (traditional) evaluation whereby Judaism is at best a faith that has been superseded by the coming of the Messiah, at worst a hideous error. Moreover, modern thought tends toward rigid systematization and, since it often expresses itself as a philosophy of history, toward viewing the past through "the obscure spectacles of a scheme." Since the historical reality of Judaism is unique enough to represent a stumbling block to almost any kind of schematization, modern thought, when faced with it, is tempted to the thoughtless response of "So much the worse for the facts." This is the substance of Professor Rotenstreich's case, which is based on an examination of the thought of Kant, Hegel, and Toynbee.

ONE wonders what Toynbee is doing on the list; after Kant and Hegel one expects Nietzsche or Heidegger, or perhaps even Spengler, not a second-rate thinker like Toynbee. But Toynbee is not only included, he is the subject of what is far and away the longest chapter in the book. If Kant can be disposed of in 22 pages, why should it take 46 to refute Toynbee? At first one is inclined to dismiss this line of inquiry, because the chapter on Toynbee, in which Professor Rotenstreich exposes with great precision the various slanders that Toynbee perpetrates on Judaism, is by far the best in the book. Thus he shows that Toynbee can write facilely about the "Jewish Rabbinical way of studying a book" without a grasp of what this implies; that Toynbee's connection of Marx with the Jewish tradition is based on a misunderstanding of both; that it is less than illuminating to consider Judaism as a part of Syriac civilization; that Jews simply refuse to act like the fossil which, according to Toynbee's system, they are; that Toynbee distorts the concept of the Chosen People; and that his negative evaluation of Judaism because of its alleged fanaticism, ritualism, and self-idolization, is based on a decided ignorance of

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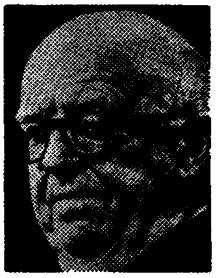

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Judaism. There is always something engaging about reading a conclusive refutation, but the trouble is that Toynbee is the best-refuted writer I know—especially when it comes to his utterances in this area. Indeed, Professor Rotenstreich suggests as much in a footnote, when he generously directs the reader to the writings of Maurice Samuel, Abba Eban, J. L. Talmon, and others. Since he is so eminently refutable, however, Toynbee's failure does not prove Rotenstreich's case: Toynbee is simply not representative of modern thought at its best. It is, therefore, strange that the author expends his greatest energy on a man who, when compared to giants like Kant and Hegel, looks like a dwarf. Yet had he not done so, Rotenstreich might have had no victory at all to show for his various combats.

FOR THE SIMPLE truth is that for various reasons Kant and Hegel prove to be much harder to tackle than Toynbee. Rotenstreich's chapter on Kant is concise and interesting but hardly conclusive. Kant is charged with viewing Judaism as a creed that favors an external law which disregards human intentions and motivations. According to Rotenstreich's Kant, Judaism is a religion which, by stressing perfunctory deeds, is legalistic and ritualistic, but neither truly moral nor rational. Furthermore, for Kant "Judaism implies isolationism and misanthropy." For those of us who are Jews it is certainly not pleasant to hear something like this, but when a major philosopher says it we might assume that it is a thoughtful statement. Approaching it as such—and it is to Rotenstreich's credit that in part he helps us do this—we can learn something from it. It is, for instance, true that Jewish emphasis on statutes had the effect, and perhaps the intention, of keeping the Jews from intermingling. But what about misanthropy? (That is, by the way, a charge already made by the Romans against the Jews, so it is certainly not a specifically Christian idea.) One would have to begin by conceding that the Jews regarded the highest things of all other nations—their gods—as "abominations." Now from an *outside* view, from the perspective of the non-Jew, does this not constitute a slander of all other men and nations, or misanthropy?

THE CHAPTER on Hegel is longer and harder to summarize. It rivals Hegel in at least one respect: it is hard to understand. As far as I can see, Professor Rotenstreich charges Hegel with dismissing Judaism because it posits too great a gulf between man and God, and because in his historical scheme Hegel simply accepts Christianity's view of Judaism as a preparatory stage of Christianity. The analysis is marred by the author's ascribing prejudices to Hegel without sufficient proof. For instance, he claims that Hegel's emotional rejection of Judaism colored his views, but the passage he cites scarcely proves this, for there Hegel compares the fate of the Jews to the fate of Macbeth. Macbeth is a tragic hero: does it bespeak an emotional *rejection* to think of the Jewish fate as heroic and tragic?

It is of course true that Hegel, like Kant, viewed Judaism from the outside. At times it seems that Professor Rotenstreich is trying to show that there are certain perils inherent in viewing a human phenomenon like Judaism from the outside instead of from the perspective of a believing Jew. Though few readers of this book will need to be told that Kant and Hegel were not believing Jews, such a point might still be worth making. One could, for instance, try to prove—as Professor Rotenstreich sometimes does—that Kant and Hegel did not approach Judaism in the right frame of mind, that is, with openness toward the possibility that its teachings might be *the* true teaching. But the author cannot very well preach what he does not practice in his own approach to the writings of Kant and Hegel. Instead he suggests that those two authors simply lacked adequate knowledge of Judaism. Even if one accepts this as true, it is not a conclusive argument unless it can be shown that nobody with an adequate knowledge of Judaism was ever anti-Judaistic. One would expect Professor Rotenstreich to wrestle with the problem posed by the anti-Judaism of Spinoza, whom, how-

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ever, the author refers to only in passing.

THE ARGUMENTS which Professor Rotenstreich seeks to refute are, at least at their best, not the arguments of non-Jews against Jews, but the arguments on behalf of philosophy against theology, of reason against faith. At times Professor Rotenstreich's approach almost causes him to overlook this fact, for he is too concerned to contrast the admitted anti-Judaism of modern thought with its treatment of Christianity. He thereby fails to give due weight to the fact that modern thought is also anti-Christian; modern thought is as such anti-theological. Nor does he investigate the possibility that many modern thinkers may have been "easier" on Christianity simply for prudential reasons, because, for instance, there were more Christians than Jews in the world.

At other times, however, Professor Rotenstreich realizes that the most profound stratum of the argument he is analyzing is an aspect of the perennial quarrel between philosophy and religion. Such realization spurs him to the attempt to demonstrate that in their treatment of Judaism Kant and Hegel, and by implication all philosophers, overstepped the bounds of philosophical competence. Had he succeeded in this attempt he would have produced a philosophical treatise equal in significance to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. He has not succeeded, if only because one cannot establish the *limits* of the competence of philosophy without establishing the *scope* of philosophy's competence first—without, that is, first seeing how much of the world unassisted human reason can grasp.

It is a tricky business to attempt to mediate the quarrel between philosophy and religion, for ultimately one must take one's place in one of the two camps. In which camp is Professor Rotenstreich? He is, in his own words, "attached to the Jewish tradition." Yet he speaks of elevating tradition to the status of philosophy, thus suggesting that the latter is supreme, and he gives no evidence of being a pious believer. One is therefore tempted to place him on the side of philosophy. But he criticizes philosophy for overstepping its bounds and he takes it to task for constructing systems that violate reality. Does he then have some privileged and comprehensive knowledge of reality beyond the power of philosophy to give? If so he has kept the source of that knowledge hidden from the reader, to whom it must seem that Professor Rotenstreich thinks himself somewhere safely beyond either faith or philosophy. The reader must be pardoned for doubting that such a "somewhere" exists.

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ECONOMIC GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR MINORITIES. By DALE L. HIESTAND. *Columbia University Press. 127 pp. $6.00.*

Reviewed by ROBERT LEKACHMAN

EVERYBODY seems to know the general course of 20th-century employment opportunities for Negroes in America. Slow but steady progress into better jobs and higher pay until the 1940's. A dramatic breakthrough during World War II into fields hitherto closed to Negroes. A slowing of progress but a consolidation of gains during the 1950's. A future rendered suddenly uncertain by the new militancy of the civil rights movement during the 1960's.

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tunity in this century, produced less extensive advances than we like to believe. Although more Negroes entered professional and technical occupations than ever before, they were overwhelmingly the low-paid specialties of teaching and social work rather than the high-pay, high-prestige vocations such as medicine, science, or engineering. Although Negroes did acquire unusually large numbers of skilled jobs during the 40's the largest single increase in their opportunities was in the low-paid, unpleasant service jobs.

One of the most depressing features of the record is the persistent over-representation of Negroes in unskilled work. Hiestand notes that in 1910, there were proportionately 50 per cent more unskilled Negro laborers than there were whites. But by 1960 the situation had so far deteriorated that Negro unskilled laborers were nearly four times as numerous, proportionally, as white laborers. While many Negroes have secured and retained new opportunities, many others have actually slid down the occupational ladder. To show the combined effect of these two movements Hiestand has devised an ingenious occupational index that compares Negro and white positions in the occupational structure.* Here are his results:

OCCUPATIONAL POSITION OF NEGROES RELATIVE TO WHITES (IN PERCENTAGES)

	Male	Female
1910	78.0	78.0
1920	78.1	71.3
1930	78.2	74.8
1940	77.5	76.8
1950	81.4	81.6
1960	82.1	84.3

The index tells a clear enough story. Slow but steady progress is a derisory description of the 1910-

*The index is constructed on the assumption that an occupation is "better" if wages and salaries are higher. In 1910 the 78.0 figure indicates that Negro males and females alike were four-fifths of the way up the ladder to the 100.0 which indicates the white position. Hiestand observes that if the occupational categories were finer, the comparisons would be still more disadvantageous to Negroes. In each of the broader classifications Negroes were concentrated in the less well-paying subcategories.

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1930 rise from 78.0 to 78.2 per cent of the white position. And while the improvement between 1940 and 1950 was real enough, the statistics for the next decade imply a return to the geological pace of the 1910-1930 period.

IN SHORT, Hiestand's careful statistical sketch conveys anything but a cheerful message about even the recent experience of Negroes in the great American job and personality market. Negroes have fared best when the American economy was operating at full blast during wartime emergencies. They have not received their fair share of jobs in new industries where growth is most rapid and prospects are best. The job experiences of Negroes in new industries still follow the standard pattern: "White workers capture the newly growing fields in which labor resources are scarce, pay levels are good, prospects for advancement are bright, the technology is most advanced, and working conditions are the most modern." In time, as still newer industries emerge, these once-new industries become less attractive to white workers, and, inevitably, "at this point Negroes secure these jobs, which are quite attractive in comparison to what had formerly been available to them." But they are no longer the best jobs, nor are they even the most secure jobs, for the threat of labor-displacing technical progress is largest in these aging industries. Thus Negroes tend to gain less and gain it later than white workers and have more trouble hanging on to what they do get.

The outlook, according to Hiestand, is no less grim:

> The remaining discrepancies between the Negro and white occupational positions . . . are so great that the prospects of substantial equality during the present century are not particularly promising. . . . Despite the current civil rights efforts, there are little prospects that all the differences between whites and Negroes in terms of their regional and residential patterns, their backgrounds, and in the way employers, unions, and others in the labor market treat them will soon be erased.

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To argue against this prognosis one has to assume that white Americans will, willingly or unwillingly, dismantle the structure of residential and educational segregation which invalidates the best of civil rights legislation and which fosters merely the futile anger of this summer's riots in the cities of the North.

This is the burden of Hiestand's tale. His monograph is not the easiest book of the season to read. It bears the marks of its origin as a doctoral dissertation: statistics are numerous, language is sober, and conclusions are usually guarded. Nevertheless, anyone who examines Hiestand with care and broods sufficiently long on some of his statistics will supply emotion enough of his own.

BOOK REVIEWERS IN THIS ISSUE

MARION MAGID'S *essay on film criticism, "Auteur, Auteur" appeared in our March issue.*

KATHLEEN NOTT, *the well-known English essayist, writes frequently in these pages.*

GEORGE KATEB, *a new contributor, teaches at Amherst and is the author of* Utopia and Its Enemies.

ROBERT LEKACHMAN *is on the economics faculty at Barnard College.*

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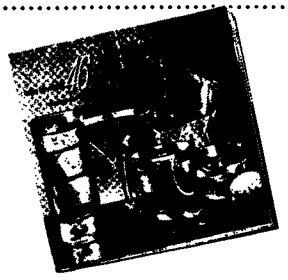

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Please send me my FREE copy of the guide: "How to make 46 great drinks at home—the way the experts make them."

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HOW TO HAVE FUN MIXING FAMOUS DRINKS AT HOME

Remove the new recipe guide above . . . then read these simple hints on how to use it

If you enjoy mixed drinks, but don't know how to mix them . . . if you cringe when a guest asks for a popular drink you've never made . . . here's your answer. Just save this handy "Barmate". It takes the work—and the guesswork—out of mixing great drinks. It makes you an expert. Here's why.

This guide contains the secrets of the experts, yet the recipes are simple, easy to follow. You'll have fun offering friends famous cocktails mixed the way they make 'em at top spots all across the nation. And, you'll be able to expertly mix drinks made with all the popular basic liquors, including whiskey, gin, vodka, rum and Southern Comfort. Try a few tonight. You'll be amazed at your own talent. But one of the most valuable tips in the "Barmate" goes even further.

This new guide also shows you how to *improve* the taste of longtime favorites . . . in some cases merely by replacing the traditional basic liquor with another one. A good example of this is the use of Southern Comfort as the base for your Manhattans, Old-Fashioneds, Sours, Collinses, etc. Try this trick and friends will praise your mixing skill. Of course, the secret is in the difference of taste and character of this basic liquor. It adds a *deliciousness* no other basic liquor can.

What *is* Southern Comfort? It's a *special* kind of liquor. Back in the early days of the Old South, men had time for the finer things in life. One such man-of-leisure in New Orleans was disturbed by the taste of even the finest whiskeys. So he took time to "smooth his spirits" with some rare and delicious ingredients . . . and Southern Comfort was born.

The formula for this unique liquor is still a family secret. But millions have discovered its pleasure. Try a bottle. See how it perks up drinks you've made for years. There's nothing like it. Just pour a jigger-full . . . *straight*, over ice cubes. One sip will convince you! Incidentally, that's the way thousands enjoy their Southern Comfort most of all.

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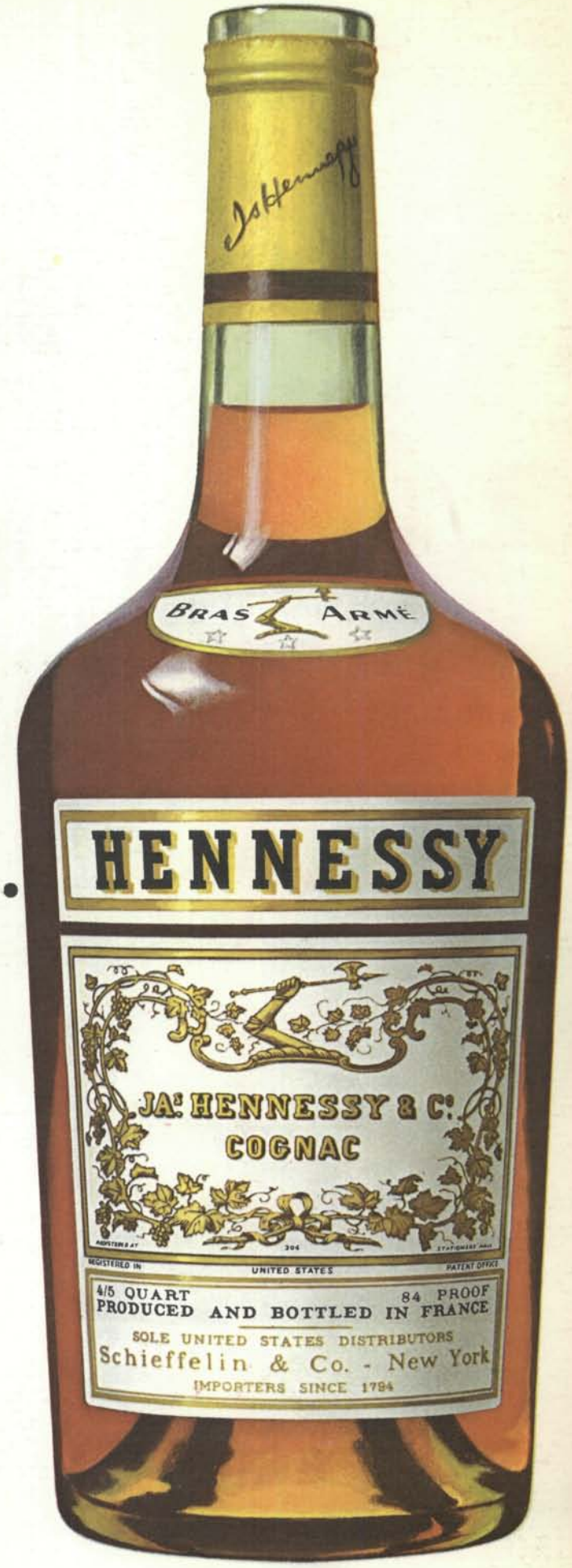

84 Proof · ©Schieffelin & Co., New York

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